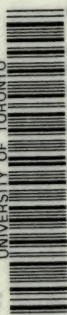


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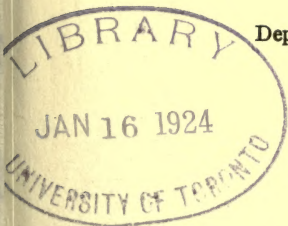
VOLUME III

OCTOBER, 1921-JULY, 1922

NORTHAMPTON, MASS.
SMITH COLLEGE

PARIS
LIBRAIRIE E. CHAMPION

Published Quarterly by the
Departments of Modern Languages of Smith College



190483
5.8.24

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KNUT HAMSUN
HIS PERSONALITY AND HIS OUTLOOK UPON LIFE

BY

JOSEF WIEHR

Associate Professor of German, Smith College

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PRINTED AND BOUND BY
GEORGE SANTA PUBLISHING CO.
MANUFACTURING PUBLISHERS
MENASHA, WISCONSIN

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vi /

Knut Hamsun

HIS PERSONALITY AND HIS OUTLOOK UPON LIFE

I

Among the Scandinavian novelists of the present day, Knut Hamsun stands in the foremost rank, and by the nature of his productions he is sharply distinguished from all the rest. The manner of his rise and development, as well as the experiences of his earlier years have also been unusual, and, all in all, Hamsun is a unique figure in the literary world of to-day.

Knut Hamsun was born on August 4, 1860, at Lom, in Gudbrandsdalen, in the eastern part of Norway. His parents were of an old peasant family in which artistic talent had cropped out repeatedly. Hamsun's grandfather, a blacksmith, was an expert in ornamental work. The parents did not prosper in Gudbrandsdalen and removed to the Lofoten Islands when Hamsun was but four years old. Here the boy grew up, surrounded by the wild, rugged, and mighty nature of *Nordland* with its light summer nights, throbbing with intense life in man, beast, and vegetation, only to sink back again into sleep and oblivion on the approach of the long, dark winter. During the last decades many changes have taken place in the mode of life of the people dwelling in these latitudes. The development of natural water power has resulted in an abundant and cheap supply of electricity, and the long winter nights have been made thereby more endurable, some industries have been established, improved means of transportation have brought about speedier, more regular, and dependable communication with the rest of the world. Civilization has been brought closer to the people of *Nordland*, but their habits of life have remained simple and their emancipation from the influences and forces of nature has as yet not progressed very far. Sixty years ago, i.e. in the childhood of Hamsun, life in *Nordland* was still more primitive.

On the Lofoten Islands, fishing is almost the sole occupation of the people. The lives of the fishermen are full of hardship, uncer-

tainty, danger, daring, and adventure. Though periods of want are not infrequent, these men enjoy a high degree of independence and personal liberty. The local merchant, who usually buys up the fish and supplies the necessities of life, is virtually their only overlord. Of course, they are always at the mercy of the elements, but since man has no share in shaping these conditions, the inevitable dependence upon them is borne more easily. Inasmuch as the people of *Nordland* were left to shift for themselves by the state, they were exempt from many of the duties which the government ordinarily exacts from the individual. It is a significant fact that they were not required to render military service until the beginning of the present century.

There cannot be any doubt that Hamsun was deeply impressed by the life about him and strongly imbued with the spirit of freedom from social restraint, and when he afterwards came again in contact with civilization and highly organized society, he rebelled against the many restrictions and limitations which he encountered and, being of a highly sensitive nature, he was often driven to exasperation by mere trifles. This fact must be borne in mind in judging his literary productions, especially those of his earlier years.

The conditions under which he spent his childhood drove him early into isolation. For several years he lived with an uncle who was a preacher of the state church, a very stern and rigorous man, who was thoroughly convinced of the truth of the old adage: spare the rod and spoil the child. Hamsun's intellectual development may have benefited by his stay with this man, but his boyhood was thereby despoiled of all happiness. In the short story *Et Spøkelse* (A Spook) Hamsun relates: "Several years I spent with an uncle of mine in a rectory in *Nordland*.¹ It was a hard time for me, a great deal of work, many floggings and rarely an hour for play and amusement. Since my uncle held me so strictly, it became gradually my only joy to steal away and be alone; when I had an hour to myself, a thing which rarely happened, I betook myself to the woods or I went up to the cemetery and

¹ In the rural parts of Norway the preachers of the state church derive a large part of their income from the farm and pasture lands belonging to each parsonage. *Præstegaarden* comprises aside from the parsonage a number of outbuildings and usually appears like the place of a more or less prosperous gentleman farmer.

roamed among the crosses and tombstones, dreamed, pondered, and talked aloud to myself.

"The rectory was in an unusually pretty location, close to the Glimma channel, a broad ocean current with large rocks, the roar of which resounded day and night, without a let-up. The current ran part of the time southward, part of the time northward, according to the conditions of the tide, but its eternal song rose unceasingly, and the waters flowed with the same swiftness summer and winter, whichever way they ran.

"Upon a hill, the church was situated and the cemetery. The church was an old wooden structure in the form of a cross and the cemetery was without trees or shrubs and there were never any flowers on the graves; but at the stone-wall forming the enclosure there used to grow the most delicious raspberries, large and juicy berries, which grew there and drew nourishment from the fertile dust of the dead. I knew each grave and every inscription and witnessed how crosses newly erected began to lean as time went on and finally fell over some stormy night.

"But though there were no flowers on the graves, during the summer the grass grew luxuriantly over the whole cemetery. It was a tall and stiff kind of grass, and I often sat there and listened to the wind rustling in this terribly hard grass which reached clear up to my waist. And in the midst of this rustling the weather-vane would swing around, and the sound of the rusty iron rang out over the whole place. It sounded as though an iron mouth was gnashing its teeth.

"When the grave-digger was at work, I often had a talk with him. He was a serious man and rarely smiled, but he was very kind towards me and when he stood there, casting up earth from a grave, he occasionally would warn me that I must get out of the way, for now he had a large femur on his spade, or a grinning skull."²

The cemetery was Hamsun's favorite haunt in those years. He thus was early impressed with the ephemerality of human life, but his joy in living and his desire for the humble pleasures of existence were by no means impaired. One can easily imagine what effect this sort of life must have had on the sensitive boy.

² *Samlede Verker*, Gyldendalske Boghandel, Kristiania og København, 1918, III, *Krattsog*, pp. 50 f.

At the age of seventeen, Hamsun was apprenticed to a shoemaker in Bodö, the chief town of the province of *Nordland*. Here he found spare time enough to carry on literary pursuits. Already in 1878 he published a solemn, gloomy poem entitled *Et Gensyn* (Meeting Again), a naively romantic production, which, however, already manifested an unusual nature sense. Shortly afterwards there appeared *Bjørger. Fortælling af Knud Pedersen Hamsund. Eget forlag. Bodø, 1878.* (Bjørger. A Story by Knud Pedersen Hamsund. Published by the Author.) In regard to style this story clearly showed the influence of Björnson's peasant tales. The theme, the objective and emotional experiences of an orphaned peasant lad, lent itself admirably to the introduction of many personal elements; a few passages revealed for the first time the skill in lyric prose which is the chief charm of many of the later works from the pen of Hamsun. But this early attempt of his to break into literature naturally failed.

Hamsun's roaming disposition made him ill-suited for a sedentary occupation and he terminated his apprenticeship long before he had entered into the mysteries of the shoemaker's trade. For a few months he worked as a coal heaver at the Bodö pier, but finally pulled up stakes altogether and disappeared. Drifting from place to place he spent several years in various forms of occupation. He worked as quarryman, at road-making, taught school, and acted as sheriff's assistant. Finally he landed in America. Here he earned his living as street-car conductor, grocery clerk, farm laborer, and what not. In the summer of 1885 Hamsun appeared in Christiania, where he managed to keep from starving to death by some newspaper work and an occasional inconoclastic lecture on literary topics.

In the fall of 1886 we find him back in the United States, this time as correspondent for a daily, *Verdens Gang* (Current Events), a position which proved so little remunerative that he had to abandon it and fall back on hard, manual labor to keep body and soul together. It was during his second stay in the United States that he, among other things, worked for many months on a Russian fishing vessel off the Newfoundland banks. His main haunts were, however, in the region between Chicago and the Dakotas. Cecil Kröger, a journalist, has given the following account of a chance meeting he had with Hamsun at Minneapolis:

"One autumn evening there appeared at Janson's Church,³ at one of the weekly discussion meetings, a stranger whom I had not seen before and whom one could not fail to notice. His refined and well-chiseled features, his tall, strong figure, his lively manners and animated conversation, his whole unique personality, sharply contrasted with his surroundings. He bore a striking resemblance to Björnson, and it seemed as though he strove to make the most of this fact and copy Björnson, which was irritating, as imitation always is. He was evidently acquainted here from former occasions, for he greeted and nodded recognition all around the gathering. This man was Knut Hamsun; he was then twenty-eight years old. He had just come in from the country, from a farm up in Dakota, where he had been working as a laborer. Immediately before that time, he had been employed as a street-car conductor in Chicago. Now he had saved enough, he thought, that he could pull through the winter without utterly starving.

"He intended to make use of this spell of leisure to deliver a number of lectures on literary topics in the city, nothing less would do. . . . And if admission was fixed as low as ten cents, and if he could get the least bigoted Scandinavian papers to give him a wee little bit of advertising, and if Janson, moreover, announced the matter to his congregation, one should be able to count on large enough a number of people that after paying for the hall enough would be left to provide him with tobacco through the winter and very likely it would suffice to buy a pair of overshoes, which he indeed was greatly in need of. He believed—he asserted with a mild oath—that he knew more about literature than any other man in Minnesota. It was, so to speak, his field, and he was honestly convinced that he possessed indisputable talent in that direction.

"For general farm labor and work on the street-cars he had no ability at all. He had earned anything but praise this summer in Dakota. He had strength enough, he was as powerful as a lion, and he was not altogether an idiot, either, but if a certain kind of work could not completely engage his attention, his thoughts ran off with him. When he had filled his wheel-barrow,

³ Kristoffer Janson, a Norwegian clergyman, founded in the early eighties of last century a Norwegian Unitarian congregation at Minneapolis. For about a year Hamsun served him as a sort of secretary. Cf. *Scandinavian Studies*, III, 3, pp. 241 ff.

he wheeled it away with perfect ease, that required no thought, no concentration; but when his brain was unoccupied, it began to busy itself with other matters, he again and again forgot to dump his load at the proper spot and came very near causing complete confusion in this task of clearing up there in Dakota.

"And he had not fared any better as street-car conductor in Chicago. He knew the names of the streets which he passed to perfection and in orderly sequence, forward and backward. Here he never made a mistake and he sang them out with a strong, melodious voice for which many a conductor could envy him. In day-time, he had, moreover, the street signs, which he could consult. But when it became dark, and when he for some reason or other had not noticed that a certain street had been passed, he was completely at a loss. He was wholly devoid of a sense of location and it was impossible for him to somehow get his bearings and find out where he was, until he came to the end of his run. He accordingly would pick out one of the street names in his list, hit or miss, and sing it out complacently. One can imagine the surprise of the good Chicago people when they were let off the car in the most impossible places. Naturally, they complained to the company."⁴

Hamsun, the dreamer and wanderer, did not find economic and social conditions in the United States to his liking, and it is not surprising that he failed to win a place for himself. He endured during this period of roaming many hardships and privations, often lacking the bare necessities of existence, but he also gained an insight into human life, vouchsafed only to very few men of genius, and hardly, if ever, to those living in undisturbed material prosperity. At the same time, he worked in his spare moments at the development of his literary talent, and amidst all the adversity which fell to his lot, he never lost sight of his lofty goal, nor the hope of ultimately attaining it. In some respects, Knut Hamsun's course reminds one of Zola's, but his rise must be considered even more phenomenal, since Hamsun was almost completely denied the advantages of a formal education.

Two successive attempts had convinced him that the United States very likely would never become his El Dorado and he again set his course homeward.

⁴ *Dagbladet*, January 1903. Cf. *Illustreret Norsk Litteraturhistorie. Siste Tidrum, 1890-1904, ved Carl Nærup*, Kristiania, 1905, pp. 99 f.

"In the summer of 1888, Mr. R. B. Anderson, now editor of the Norwegian weekly newspaper *Amerika*, published at Madison, Wis., then American minister at the court of Denmark, was returning to his post after a short vacation. One day in mid-Atlantic, as he lounged about on the lower deck among the steerage passengers, he suddenly noticed a young fellow who had come to his home in Madison some years before with a letter of introduction from Björnson. He recognized Hamsun. He was not an inviting figure—dirty, ragged, and worse than unkempt, and at that moment he was gambling for small stakes with equally disreputable companions on the cover of one of the hatches. Mr. Anderson invited him to the promenade deck, talked with him and did his best to be friendly. Hamsun wore in his coat lapel a bit of black ribbon. Mr. Anderson inquired solicitously for whom he was mourning—for some relative perhaps?

"'No,' said Hamsun defiantly, 'for the martyrs of Haymarket.' After that the respectable scholar and diplomat shut his heart and the door of the American legation against this radical vagabond. Hamsun tried to interest Mr. Anderson in a large mass of manuscript, enough, it seemed to him, to make a book of a thousand pages. But in vain. 'Knut Hamsun is in my mind an anarchist, and I had no use for people of that ilk.' He lost the opportunity of further nourishing his dislike by reading the grotesque satire of Hamsun's first complete book, *Fra det moderne Amerikas Aandsliv*."⁵

"Of American Culture" came out in the spring of 1889. With this book Hamsun really made his debut in literature. It is a very witty, often caustic attack upon American culture. In a disconnected, rambling fashion, Hamsun deals here with a large number of heterogeneous topics.

The initial chapter treats of American patriotism. If a resident of the United States had written and published a similar attack in this country during the war, he surely would have been put in the federal penitentiary—if he had not been lynched without much ado.

"Patriotism engendered by means of tin-fifes has permeated their (the people's) conceptions from their very childhood and has transformed a justifiable national pride into an indefensible

⁵ Cf. *Scandinavian Studies*, III, 3, pp. 242 f.

national conceit, which no one and nothing can budge.”⁶ Materialism rules supreme. “There has been evolved in America a form of life which aims singly and solely at the acquisition of comfort, the gain of material possessions, wealth.”⁷ Wealth constitutes the basis of a kind of aristocracy. But “this American aristocracy, to which all people render homage with an outright religious fervor, possesses the power of the ‘genuine’ aristocracy of the middle ages, without any of the latter’s nobility. It means, coarsely and brutally, a certain number of horse-power of economic resistance. A European cannot form the slightest conception of it—even if he knows the power of money from his native country—to what extent this aristocracy rules in America, he cannot even imagine that money could become so omnipotent.”⁸

American liberty is a most deficient instrument. “Such is true in particular in regard to all matters where religious stultification and patriotic fanaticism co-operate with each other. . . . There is an enormous gap in American liberty, a chasm which is kept open by the thick-headed democracy which controls liberty in America in such absolute fashion.”⁹

Hamsun seems here to contradict himself, in as much as he asserts, on the one hand, that the moneyed aristocracy rules, on the other hand, that democracy holds supreme sway. But aside from its larger economic power, this aristocracy is in his opinion not really elevated above the masses of the people and easily blends with the latter on all occasions in which the interests of the few and the many are not the dominating feature.—Immigrants become quickly Americanized, because it is of the utmost economic importance for them. To have Americanized millions upon millions of immigrants does, however, not constitute a cultural achievement. Hamsun holds that the human material with which the United States has to work, is of a very inferior kind and finds it natural that the results leave a great deal to be desired, though by implication he criticizes the chief aim striven for. “America has first and foremost made Americans of riffraff, has enrolled them in a state and has made citizens of them; they

⁶ *Fra det moderne Amerikas Aandsliv. Af Knut Hamsun.* København, 1889. p. 29.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 182 f.

may develop into human beings when time and opportunity come about."¹⁰

Cultural life there is none; "the most original and vigorous manifestation" in this realm, Hamsun sees in American journalism, in spite of the fact that it reflects only the consciousness of the masses, by the interests of which it is also controlled. And the lives of the American people are governed by coarse materialism, which is not without a certain grandeur, but utterly selfish and inimical to culture. The last vestige of the latter existing in the United States was destroyed by the Civil War. "This was a war against aristocracy, and was waged with the intense, mad hatred of democracy against the aristocracy of the South."¹¹

Prudishness in the realm of art, the rule of women, self-satisfied ignorance about the rest of the world inculcated by our schools, are some of our additional shortcomings mentioned. The easiest way to dispose of the charges set forth by Hamsun's "Of American Culture" is, of course, to pick out some of the most obvious errors and exaggerations in his presentation and make them the basis of a general refutation. But even such a procedure would mean a waste of effort, since the book refers to conditions of a generation ago. It is different with his appraisal of Ralph Waldo Emerson, to which more than forty pages are devoted, and which, in essence, is surely correct.

Hamsun's criticism throughout the entire book is one-sided, and often unjust, but the grotesque humor of the presentation should prevent the reader from taking him too seriously, unless he should feel too hard hit by the proverbial grain of truth, which is by no means lacking.

The experiences of Hamsun in the United States explain only in part his severe verdict upon American culture. If he had met here with eminent success instead of dismal failure, he might have been perhaps a little more tolerant in his judgment. But in its essence it would have remained the same, because of Hamsun's general attitude towards human values. The publication of his book about America produced some echo and made Hamsun's name known, but possessing no esthetic merit, it did not give him a literary reputation. This latter was, however, now at hand.

¹⁰ *Aandsliv*, p. 32.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 230.

II

Hamsun won name and fame almost over night upon the appearance of *Sult* (Hunger), which in book form came out in 1890.¹² The work is commonly designated as a psychological novel. It is, indeed, psychological in every fibre, inasmuch as it is a running account of the states of consciousness of the hero, but it cannot very well be regarded as a novel. It is completely lacking in plot, development, and action; it does not even delineate character and there is no real conclusion. *Sult* is a very skilful, minute analysis and portrayal of the physiologic and psychic experiences of a young man with literary ambition and real poetic talent, but lacking all means of subsistence and the practical ability to obtain them, and consequently doomed to starvation. Needless to say, Hamsun has here freely drawn on his own experiences, and the work is in a certain limited sense autobiographic. The future biographer of Hamsun, to be sure, would search the book in vain for so-called facts. The external and material conditions of existence were of little concern to Hamsun at that period. In *Sult*, the changing moods of the nameless hero are the dominating feature from the beginning to the end.

Moments of hope and inspiration alternate with days and weeks of physical and spiritual distress and bleak despair. Things go from bad to worse, and the struggling young author finally hires out as a sailor—in the unconscious endeavor to escape starvation. He acts here, as always, from sheer momentary impulse and, so to speak, tumbles on board the vessel by pure accident. Indeed, most of the characters which Hamsun has created in his earlier works are primarily governed by blind impulses, instincts, and feelings.

Sult is written in the first person, the form which is unquestionably best suited for this narrative, and the structure is exceedingly simple and artless. Each of the four sections describes a particular crisis in the life of the young man, separated by intervals of a few weeks from each other. The one and only theme dealt with is treated at great length, and a certain painful impression upon the reader is inevitable. But Hamsun's mastery of style is such that our interest never lags in the perusal of his pages.

¹² A fragment of this work had appeared in the Danish periodical *Ny Jord* (New Soil), in the October number for the year 1888.

The best passages of this work are really lyric prose, a form of expression which Hamsun employed with consummate skill in subsequent productions. And every sentence is pulsating with intense life and conveys the impression of absolute sincerity and truthfulness.

It is ordinarily difficult to convince the reader, or the audience in a theater, of the real superiority of a supposed genius without name or fame. But Hamsun has succeeded where many others have failed. The wild, feverish flights of fancy in which his hero again and again indulges are so evidently the product of a highly poetic imagination that we concede at once the real genius of the young man.

As has been said before, his character is not delineated and it is not the immediate source of his actions. But we may draw a number of reliable inferences in regard to the character of the man. At first sight, he seems to be lacking in will power, but on closer analysis one comes to the conclusion that he possesses a remarkably strong will. The tenacity with which he carries on his literary efforts in spite of their seeming futility is in itself sufficient proof of it. He exhibits the pride of the intellectual and ethical aristocrat, but is singularly modest in the evaluation of his own merits. Although he is not concerned about morality at all, he never stoops to an actually low deed. As a matter of fact, he is little else but a passive sufferer. Himself of a very sensitive nature, he shows delicate regard for the rights and feelings of others—if some mad impulse does not get the better of him; and whenever he has wronged any one under the influence of some strange, instinctive compulsion, he experiences afterwards the deepest remorse. In spite of his own sufferings, he has compassion for the misfortune of others, although he tries frequently to conceal it under a harsh exterior. When, on rare occasions, he gets into possession of a few dollars, he bestows the money upon others in such indiscriminate fashion as to make the trained social worker throw up his hands in holy horror and disgust. He shows entire disregard of the consequences of his acts, but conventional morals and even social prejudices win influence upon his conduct frequently. Like Hamsun himself, the hero shows often a desire to dazzle and dumbfound, and even when in deepest distress, he cannot resist the temptation to play some innocent prank on some one.

When he is under the influence of such compelling instincts, his consciousness seems to be divided, his logical ego stands by, as it were, as a spectator and critic of the strange antics in which the other half of his self indulges, apparently without any power of interfering. But Hamsun only portrays states of consciousness, he does not try to explain them. The underlying causes do not concern him.

The setting of *Sult* is Christiania, but local color is lacking, it would seem. The environment of the hero is brought in only in as far as it is inseparable from the portrayal of his moods and physical and mental states. A naturalist would have found a rich harvest in the very features which Hamsun largely ignores. But he has not shrunk from depicting some repulsive scenes and incidents, simply because these are an organic part of the whole. Hamsun has always opposed, at the beginning of his literary career, indeed, with a great deal of vehemence, the vogue of making narrative and dramatic art the vehicle for the presentation of some problem, claim, or theory, which was dominant in Scandinavian literature as well as elsewhere in the eighties of last century. To be a work of art, a novel or a drama must above all else be poetic. It should not deal with material things and the external occurrences of life, but depict the roaming of thoughts and feelings in the infinite sky, the airy flights of fancy, of heart and brain, strange psychological influences of the nerves, the blood, of flesh and bone, in short, the subconscious and unconscious life of the human soul. He has, on several occasions, not been able to resist the temptation to make his works the means of propaganda against certain tendencies of the time; but in *Sult* he has scrupulously adhered to his own program. There is no criticism or condemnation of a society so constituted that some of its truly superior members must perish. Not society, but Providence, is made responsible by the young author for his wretched fate. At times, he is, indeed, resigned and submissive, but again and again, he breaks into wild, blasphemous defiance of the Supreme Being, as in the following:

"I tell thee, Apis in heaven above, I know that I shall die, and yet I mock thee, with death staring into my face. Thou hast used might against me and thou dost not know that I shall never humble myself in adversity. Shouldst thou not know this? Hast thou created my heart whilst thou wert asleep? I tell thee,

all my life's energy and every drop of my blood delights in mocking thee and in spurning thy mercy. From this hour on I forsake all thy doings and thy whole being, I shall curse my thoughts if they stray to thee again, and tear off my lips if they again pronounce thy name. If thou art, I speak to thee the last word in life and death; I bid thee farewell."¹³

Hamsun then knew but defiance, though he has since become resigned and calm towards the Power that sustains the universe. He is far from being an infidel, but the teachings of Christianity, or rather the creeds and dogmas of the various religions, he rejects. And he still maintains that misfortune, wretchedness, and want do not bring a man nearer to God, but, on the contrary, debase him.

The outstanding feature in *Sult* is the absolute, unsparing truthfulness of the picture presented. By the production of this work, Hamsun, no doubt, sought to free his mind from terrible memories of the past that were haunting him, and the identity of the author with the hero goes very far.

In the treatment of a theme like that of *Sult*, one would hardly expect to find much poetic beauty, and yet this quality is already present. It breaks forth like a strange, elusive light from certain parts of *Mysterier* (Mysteries), which appeared in 1892. This novel has many traits in common with *Sult*. In the first place, *Mysterier* is also primarily a psychological study, and the main character seems to be identical with that of *Sult*. What little we learn about the age, the past, and similar features of Johan Nilsen Nagel, the central figure in *Mysterier*, makes it perfectly possible to regard him as the same young man who one winter evening fled in so strange a fashion from the scene of his misery. The young author of *Sult* is, to be sure, a very strange, eccentric individual, whose queer mental vagaries seem to result, however, chiefly from sheer starvation. Nagel, on the other hand, must be considered a man of hopelessly unbalanced mind. Yet the former is evidently drifting towards ultimate insanity, and in his entire mental and moral make-up he is virtually identical with Nagel. One trait is apparently new in the latter: his attitude towards nature; but traces of this nature-feeling are to be found in *Sult*, despite the fact that the setting of this work affords virtually no

¹³ *Verker*, I, *Sult*, p. 120.

opportunity to reveal it. In traits of character and mode of conduct, the two men bear a striking resemblance.

Nagel plumps down into the little coast town, which is the scene of the novel, so to speak, from a clear sky. He has no intention of making a stop here when he comes in on the steamer. He acts entirely on impulse when he decides to land. But prompt action does not lie in his nature, and so he fails to get off in time, though his baggage is already on the pier. The next day, he arrives overland with horse and team. He does not know the place, nor any of the people, but he must come to meet his destiny. It has been so ordained by the mysterious forces which govern human life.

We learn virtually nothing about his antecedents, his place in society, his aims in life, and are given only a few, in part contradictory hints about his past. Immediately after his arrival, he falls desperately in love with Dagny Kielland, the daughter of the pastor, who very recently has become engaged to a young naval officer. There seems to be no hope for Nagel, and yet he is on the point of winning Dagny when he gives up in despair. He then seeks to find peace of mind and humble bliss by a union with Martha Gude, a poor and elderly maiden, whose chief traits of character are innocence, kindness, and humility. She is the opposite of Dagny, who is ambitious, proud, and coquettish. Dagny interferes in the matter, actuated by jealousy, and Martha retracts her promise to marry Nagel. To make doubly sure, Dagny spirits her away. So Nagel loses his last foothold in life. After an unsuccessful attempt at suicide by means of poison—a solicitous soul had found a chance to substitute water for the Prussic acid which Nagel always carried with him—he contracts a fever because of the excitement and exposure. Haunted by voices and omens from the unknown, he drowns himself in a fit of despair. The events which lead to the catastrophe are comprised in a few brief weeks. The plot of the novel is meager, but there is action, a certain development, a number of the minor characters are well depicted, and we find here, moreover, a fairly complete portrayal of the mode of life and manners prevailing in a certain stratum of Norwegian society. *Mysterier* is therefore actually a novel. The suggestion has been made repeatedly that "mystifications" would be a more appropriate title for this work. But such an appraisal is based on externalities and superficialities. Nagel, indeed, inten-

tionally mystifies the good people, but Hamsun's concern about the mysterious forces which govern the life of his hero is a far weightier fact. The oddity of Nagel does not detract in the least from it. As in *Sult*, no attempt is made to show up the underlying causes of his abnormal conduct. In *Mysterier*, Hamsun has laid bare his own self perhaps more than in any other of his works; Nagel is above all the mouth-piece for the views which the author then held and which only very gradually underwent a modification. *Mysterier* makes it very evident that Hamsun had not yet been able to adjust himself to the world as it is.

Johan Nilsen Nagel is hopelessly bankrupt. Life is devoid for him of any higher meaning; it seems to him but one big, disgusting farce. Men in general are egoists, hypocrites, and fools. Mediocrity swells out in blatant pride and poses for real greatness, and the masses in their imbecility willingly render tribute. So-called men of genius, the leaders in the various fields of human endeavor, build their successes upon ridiculously small achievements, upon which they, moreover, stumble by accident pure and simple. And genius has become nauseatingly commonplace, that is, what is acclaimed as genius by public opinion.

"There soon will be a great man in each community, while perhaps not even a thousand years suffice to produce a single really great man."¹⁴ And even such a superman is not entitled to any veneration on the part of his fellow-beings, since his superior genius is but the common product and possession of all mankind.

"No, his views were confirmed again and again. Nothing but lice, old-milk cheese and Luther's catechism everywhere. And the good people were medium-sized citizens dwelling in three-story huts; they ate and drank sufficiently, treated themselves to toddy and election talk and dealt in soft soap, brass combs and fish all the year around. But at night, when a thunder storm came up, they lay there and read Johann Arndt¹⁵ out of pure anxiety. Yes, let us have a single, real exception, see if it can be done! Give us, for example, a great crime, a salient sin! But not these ridiculous abc-transgressions, no, let us have the rare and hair-raising debauch, this delicious profligacy, the arch-sin, full of hell's

¹⁴ *Verker*, II, *Mysterier*, p. 252.

¹⁵ A Protestant theologian, died 1621, who wrote a number of books of devotion which still enjoy popularity, especially in pietistic circles.

wild splendor. No, life was petty everywhere. What do you think of the elections, sir? I am very much afraid for Buskerud."¹⁶

A number of the "giants" of the eighties are singled out, and the cloak of greatness with which they drape themselves is torn from their shoulders. For the most part, these are literary men. Tolstoy is a great novelist, but considered from the philosophic point of view, he is a mere fool. He is not a creator of new thoughts, but merely a popularizer of old ideas, conceived long ago by other and greater men. And it is not surprising that he, in his declining years, should preach renunciation; many other men have done so in their declining years when nature compelled them to renounce. Moreover, Tolstoy has humanly and selfishly set a limit to his renunciation, only he makes Countess Tolstoy shoulder the responsibility.

"Ibsen has been spoken of as a thinker; wouldn't it be well to differentiate a little between popular reasoning and actual thinking? Ibsen's fame has been mentioned, his courage has been thrown into our teeth; wouldn't it be well to differentiate a little between theoretical and practical courage, between the unselfish, blind spirit of rebellion and this sort of domestic, mutinous impudence? The former blazes forth in actual life, the latter dumbfounds us in the theater. The Norwegian author who does not puff himself up and wield a pin as though it were a lance, is not accounted a full-fledged Norwegian author at all; each one must find for himself some gate-post or other to tilt with, or he would not be considered a courageous chap. Yes, indeed, it was awfully amusing to look on from a distance. It was verily a din of battle and a display of courage as in one of the combats of the great Napoleon, but a danger and a risk as in a French duel. . . . No, a man who wanted to revolt must not be a little, scribbling curiosity, a mere literary concept for the Germans, but a struggling, acting individual in the midst of the turmoil of life. Ibsen's

¹⁶ *Verker*, II, *Mysterier*, p. 55.

It is interesting to note that Nagel sees his fellow countrymen much in the same light as Ibsen's Brand. They are but pigmies in their virtues and vices, in their aims and lives. Both men plead for greatness, for whole-hearted, fearless devotion to a single aim. But here their ways part. For Brand, the ideal is renunciation, the conquest of the animal in man, though he, too, would prefer outright wickedness to a faltering, lukewarm course; for Nagel, the ideal would seem to be a reckless surrender to those very forces which Brand combats.

revolutionary courage would, indeed, never lead any one into a risky place."¹⁷

It would be of little importance what such an eccentric man as Nagel—he quite correctly describes himself as “at variance with all about everything”—says and thinks, if it were not for the fact that his iconoclastic views are identical with those to which Hamsun subscribed at that time. That Nagel allots a niche in the hall of fame to Björnson is also entirely in keeping with Hamsun’s own estimate. He was appealed to by Björnson’s strong personality, his keen interest in the actual affairs of life, his vigorous participation in them, and the positive, fearless stand he often took. Björnson did not keep himself aloof and did not confine himself to theorizing from a distance, like Ibsen, but was always to be found in the midst of the battle. Hamsun paid unstinted praise to Björnson’s greatness in a poem which he wrote on the occasion of the seventieth birthday of the latter. The final stanzas of it read:

Han er Tolken født og baaren
for vor Nød og Lyst.
Ingens Arm som hans at føre,
ingens Ord som hans at røre.
Naar han tier er det tyst.

Saa en Kvæld vil Stumhet ruge
langs vor lange Kyst.
Fjældet staar og lytter, bier—
ingen svarer, Landet tier.

Naar han tier blir det tyst.*

Björnson’s services to his country and to mankind are summed up in the following verses written by Hamsun on the death of his great compatriot:

Aldrig saa lød det en blødere Fløte fra nogen,
aldrig et mere alvorlig og varslende Horn:
Kvidder og Uveir og Lek ifra Fjældet til Skogen,
et Syvstjærnesus over Enger og bølgende Korn.

¹⁷ *Verker*, II, *Mysterier*, p. 177.

*Interpreter born and bred he is / Of our grief and joy. / No one is like him as a leader, / No one’s word as stirring as his. / He being silent, all are mute.

Thus one day will silence brood / All along our coast. / The mountains stand and listen, waiting— / No one answers, the land is hushed. / When he ceases, all stay mute.

Et Kor fra hans Hjertes Grupe,
 men forrest en glad Tenor—
 og Sangen fløt fra hans Strupe,
 og Blomster og Sol og Barmhjærtighed
 strødde han ned i sit Spor.

Ja Blomster og Sol og Barmhjærtighed
 strødde han ned i sit Spor.

Landskjendt i Verden, huskjendt i Landene vide
 talte han bærende Ord til den lyttende Slægt,
 drev som en Sommersolshverv over Hardvinters Tide,
 løftet og lettet og løste de Lænkedes Vægt.

Her var han Landets Hyrde,
 hist de Forsaktes Tolk,
 han stod under Vaabenbyrde
 for alle de Trængte i Verden var
 og alle kjæpende Folk.

Han stod under Vaabenbyrde
 for alle kjæpende Folk.*

Of other than literary men, Nagel derides Gladstone as a self-righteous bigot, whose reputation rests on the power of his lungs and whose whole cleverness consists in being able to prove to the masses that two times two are four.

Nagel is at odds with life in general, or at least with all human institutions. Peace and harmony come to him only on rare occasions in close communion with nature. One bright summer day, he is lying in the woods. "He was in a strange state, filled with physical satisfaction; each nerve of his was wide awake, he heard music in his blood, felt akin to all nature, to the sun and the mountains and everything else, perceived the feeling of his own ego streaming upon him from the trees, the knolls, and the

*Never heard we gentler tune from the flute of any, / Never more serious call from the warning horn: / Twitter and storm-blast and play from the mountains and woodlands, / A zephyr-like breeze over meadows and billowing grain. / A choir from the depths of his heart, / A jubilant tenor foremost— / And song flowed forth from his throat, / And flowers and sun and kindheartedness / He strewed wherever he strode.

Known the wide world over, in each home of many a land, / Uplifting words he spoke to all the listening race, / Passed like the summer sun's splendor through stern winter's night, / Bore up and relieved and made free from their weight the oppressed. / Now he was our country's guardian, / Now the spokesman of all the forsaken / Ever he bore the shining armor / For all on earth who are wronged / And for all the striving host.

grass. His soul expanded within him and became sonorous like an organ and he never forgot how this gentle music actually rose and fell in his blood."¹⁸

But such states are most ephemeral, life intrudes upon them and they vanish. And Nagel does not really seek solitude and nature; he is drawn to his fellow men, but is unable to adapt himself to the rules and conventions governing social intercourse. He cannot play the game since it is contrary to his nature and he, moreover, will not play it since it seems sheer humbug to him. Very likely his inability is the chief reason for his adverse appraisal. He is, indeed, "a stranger, a foreigner in human life, a whim of the creator."¹⁹

The personal element is strong in all the works of Hamsun, but it seems nowhere more pronounced than in *Mysterier*. The novel is an unsparing self-revelation and confession. In regard to style and composition, it is akin to *Sult*, but the characters and situations are depicted in a more concrete and objective fashion—of course, seen through the eyes of Hamsun. Even in his later works, where the personality of the author is more suppressed, we do not have objective pictures in the strict sense of the word. But Hamsun can make his characters stand out with a few bold strokes as if from a canvas and shows superior skill in characterization.

III

In *Redaktør Lyng*e (Editor Lyng), 1893, he has departed from his own rule: art for art's sake, for this novel constitutes an attack upon certain features of present-day journalism, such as it has developed in Norway. There is virtually no plot, no development, no conclusion. The portrayal, or exposure, of editor Lyng is the main purpose of the story. As the name implies (*lyng* = heather), Lyng is of peasant stock. In his student days, he has suffered from want and obscurity, but things have changed now, thanks to the determination of Lyng to succeed—by means foul or fair. He now enjoys material prosperity, the widest possible publicity, and a great deal of influence, all through his paper, the *Gazette*, a yellow journal of the worst type, which owes its popularity to the novelties, sensations, and scandals which it purveys

¹⁸ *Verker*, II, *Mysterier*, p. 54.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 253.

to its readers. But in order not to lose any ground, Lynge must keep himself and his paper perpetually in the lime-light. Any means suitable to accomplish this he uses; the dispensing of scandals is the most effective, and as a scandal-monger Lynge excels.

"His happy talent to intrude everywhere and to nose into the smallest crevices after something to put into his paper enabled Lynge continually to bring something unsavory into the light of day. . . . And the public honored him according to his deserts; the eyes of the crowd were upon him when he passed through the streets on the way to and from his office. . . . The days were over, those cheerless student days, when he had been compelled to push ahead by many a dubious expedient, and finally had squeezed through the examination fairly satisfactorily. He was then a young and enthusiastic country lad, quick to learn, and with a mind clever and nimble in any sort of a pinch; he felt his strength and was teeming with plans, he offered his services, sighed when turned down, and fell asleep at night with clenched fists. But just wait, just wait, his time was sure to come. And those who waited lived to see that he now governed a whole city and could overthrow the cabinet of the country. . . . There was really not a hole so small that Lynge could not crawl into it and bring forth from it some interesting idea. And if one in addition to this took into account all the painters and humorists who wrote for the *Gazette* in the jargon of the masses, it was not in the least surprising that the paper was read eagerly everywhere."²⁰

Høibro, a poor bank clerk and uncompromising radical, who primarily serves the purpose of voicing Hamsun's own opinions and convictions, says of the shrewd editor:

"Lynge is one of us peasant students who has deteriorated morally and spiritually by being transplanted into a strange soil and atmosphere. He is a little country jay from a provincial town who wants to pose as a liberal and top-notch, a part for which he was not born. The man is lacking nobility of heart, his blood is tainted. To be more exact, he is a talented, boyish rascal who never will attain to a man's stature. . . . We may say that he always acts from some ephemeral artistic impulse, or from small, calculating selfishness, or from both of these motives combined. He does everything from the desire to get his name before the

²⁰ *Verker*, IV, *Lynge*, pp. 17 f. and 169.

people of Christiania, to be considered a deucedly clever editor of his little sheet and out of peasant-like, greedy covetousness for a few hundred dollars more in annual profits. That's all there is to this man and his psychology."²¹

Bondesen (*bonde*=peasant), a student, serves as a sort of understudy to Lynge, into whose place he steps in later works of Hamsun. The attack of the author seems to be directed against a particular individual rather than against a certain section of the country's press. It is partial and full of apparently personal bitterness and thereby loses weight. The press and political manœuvring, also touched upon in *Editor Lynge*, had been assailed before in Norwegian literature by men like Ibsen, Björnson and Arne Garborg, to mention only the most important names. In *Bondestudentar*, Garborg has dealt also with the perils to morals and character which threaten the impecunious students from the rural districts. *Editor Lynge* calls forth reminiscences, but does not show pronounced influences, from the earlier works. A practice which crops out here for the first time in Hamsun's productions is the re-introduction of characters from previous works. They very likely had their prototypes in life. Garborg and Kielland also are fond of this device.

Høibro, the young bank clerk already referred to, is made the mouth-piece of Hamsun's radicalism. At a political meeting, he lays down his creed, though he is well aware that he will make no friends and find no response. To make profession of his views seems a moral necessity for him.

"He only wishes to implore from the bottom of his heart those strict adherents to the several parties to have mercy on all those unfortunate individuals who belong to no party, those homeless souls, those radicals, whom neither the liberals nor the conservatives can get into their folds. There are, you know, as many minds as there are heads, some moving fast and others slowly; there are those who put their trust in liberal policies and a republic, and consider this the most radical conception existing on our globe, while others may have thought over these matters and may have gotten beyond them long ago. The human soul cannot well be expressed in the form of a whole number, it consists of many different shades, of contradictions, of hundreds of fractional

²¹ *Verker*, IV, *Lynge*, p. 72.

parts, and the more modern a soul is, the larger the number of shades composing it. But such a complex soul cannot very well find a permanent place within any of the parties. What the different parties teach and believe, these souls have long since cast off, they are radicals who in the course of their development have used up the store of adherence to parties which they once possessed; comets without orbits they are which follow their own paths, since they left those of all others. . . . They are, as a rule, men of will-power, strong men, they have a goal: happiness, the largest degree of happiness attainable, and they have also the means: honesty, absolute integrity, contempt for all personal advantage. They fight desperately for their convictions, they sacrifice themselves for them, and they do not believe in fixed political creeds, therefore they cannot be members of any party, but they believe in nobility of the heart, in the culture of their ethical beings. Their words may be stern and hard, their weapons cruel and dangerous, why not? But they are pure of heart, and that is the only thing which matters."²²

We may be sure that this was Hamsun's own creed, and there is no evidence in his works that it has undergone any important changes.

Considered from the esthetic point of view, *Editor Lynge* is too abstract, too polemic; the work is also lacking in purely human interest. *Ny Jord* (Shallow Soil), which came out the same year, is of a similar nature, but stands higher as a work of art and makes a stronger appeal to our sympathy or antipathy. Whether the characters, conditions, and events here depicted may be considered as true to life, it is difficult to decide. The plot is more elaborate than in any of the preceding works; there are two currents of action, interlaced with each other and yet distinct. We have, in the first place, the fate of Ole Henriksen, a most able, generous, indeed, magnanimous young merchant, who is driven to suicide when Aagot Lynum, his betrothed, is lured to ruin by one of the young literary lights: and running parallel to it, the going astray of Mrs. Hanka Lange Tidemand, the wife of Ole's best friend, the unfaltering love, devotion and forbearance of Tidemand towards his unfaithful spouse, and the final reconciliation of the two. The action is interesting, but the chief purpose of the author

²² *Verker*, IV, *Lynge*, pp. 31 f.

was the portrayal of the literary coterie, which he represents as a festering sore on the social organism of the Norwegian capital. There is not a single individual with the divine spark of genius burning within his soul in the entire clique. The productions of these would-be artists are the results of laborious efforts, mediocre, shallow, and insincere. And yet these young men consider themselves the very salt of the earth, and the public seems in no manner to question their claims. Their mode of life is that of the *bohème*, though some of their number strive to dress in the height of fashion. They spend their time at cafés and restaurants, in the parks, and on the street. To turn night into day is for them the natural thing and constitutes the chief evidence of their superiority. Most of these men are nothing but parasites, who brazenly exploit the prosperous young businessmen, whom they not only inwardly look down upon, but whom they treat with contempt to their very faces. To contract debts to the amount of thousands of dollars, without the slightest intention of ever paying them, is in their estimation an exceptionally commendable accomplishment. The world not only owes them a living, but one on the fat of the land.

In their relations towards each other, they manifest little else but selfishness, envy, underhandedness, malice, and spite. There are, of course, gradations and variations in this group. Paulsberg, who has already succeeded in establishing his fame, chiefly by keeping his name before the public through the skilful use of the daily press, affects a certain dignity and reserve, and impresses people by his taciturnity, or rare, sphinx-like utterances. The painter Milde is brutally coarse and vulgar, and stupidly frank. Øien, whom we have met already in the two preceding novels, is effeminate, sentimental, and inoffensive. The worst rascal is the lyric poet Irgens, a man, it would seem, without scruples of any sort, full of arrogant conceit, and entirely lacking in self-respect and merit as a poet. It is Irgens who leads Mrs. Hanka astray and seduces and utterly ruins Aagot Lynum. He, moreover, exploits both financially.

It seems strange that a man like Ole Henriksen, a clear-sighted, cool-headed businessman, so utterly fails to see through the members of the clique. Hamsun has depicted Ole as a naive, confiding young man with the purest of motives, the best of intentions, and a high regard for all men of supposed genius. His

very modest opinion of himself leads him to accept the verdict of the public, and he considers it almost a duty of men of means to help the struggling talents. Evidently, he is not attracted to this group of esthetic lights by the atmosphere of licentiousness, frivolity, and debauchery in which they live, but rather by genuine admiration for art, and, to some extent perhaps, by their ever-ready wit. The same is also true of Tidemand. These young businessmen have both a most sensitive regard for the rights of others and they are models of unselfish lovers. Tidemand makes studied efforts to lead the people to think that he himself, and not his wife, is to blame for the breaking-up of his family and home. His regard for the individual liberty of his wife amounts really to a fault. He fails to see, however, the grave danger which is threatening Hanka and believes to be promoting her true happiness in according her perfect freedom. His devotion to her never ceases, and when she at last repents, he makes reconciliation easy for her.

Ole, his friend, shows the trustfulness of an innocent child. Judging others by himself, he simply laughs when he is told that it is perhaps unwise to permit Aagot so often to roam with Irgens. He rates his friend, the noble-minded poet Irgens, and Aagot, his betrothed, so high that any sort of suspicion would seem to him an insult to both. When the incredible does happen, the shock is so severe that his efforts to recover from it are vain. In the daily routine of the coterie it does not produce a ripple when Ole ends his life by means of a bullet. He and his friend Tidemand, these two supposedly materialistic businessmen, are shown to be really idealists with exceptional modesty, inward nobility, and great depth of feeling. They possess the full sympathy of the author, who has bestowed upon them in a large measure his own attitude towards life. We find in the works of Hamsun other figures from the commercial life, past and present, as, for instance, Ferdinand Mack and Consul C. A. Johnsen, but never again such superior characters as Ole Henriksen and Tidemand.

The women characters are, judged from the ethical point of view, inferior to them. Hanka is evidently the product of a mis-directed striving for emancipation; she seems to acknowledge no duty except the duty to herself. Her ideals are those of Ibsen's Nora. But it is not so much her moral sense as her reasoning power which is poorly developed, and sentimentality rather than

sensuality makes her an easy prey for Irgens. Lack of any serious occupation, an abundance of material means, and the foolish indulgence her husband shows towards her vagaries are contributing causes. It is not made quite clear how she first came in contact with the artist clique by which she becomes infected with such a distaste for simple and quiet home life, but it was probably Tidemand himself who introduced her to this circle. Since he, in spite of his greater maturity and wider horizon, allowed himself to be misled by public opinion into the belief that these artist really were what they claim to be, men of true and superior genius, it is not surprising that Hanka becomes the victim of the same delusion. But this consideration hardly lessens her moral guilt. That she ultimately regains her balance results from external causes. When Tideman finally agrees to a divorce, Hanka is ready to marry Irgens, only to be coldly and brutally rejected by him. The case of Aagot is somewhat different. She is hardly nineteen, has grown up in the country, is very inexperienced, confiding, naive, and innocent. Ole introduces her on the very day of her arrival at the capital to this group of artists and almost encourages her frequent expeditions with Irgens. But the fact remains that Aagot very soon becomes conscious of it that her associations with Irgens contain a certain element of the clandestine and forbidden. She makes some effort to overcome his seductive influence, but ultimately becomes his victim.

In *Redaktør Lyng*, the young enthusiast and radical idealist Høibro voices the views of the author. In *Ny Jord*, Hamsun's own attitude is finding emphatic expression through the blunt, unsparing observations of Coldevin, a man well along in years and Aagot's former tutor. It is quite clear that he really loves the young girl, though in an entirely unselfish manner. To promote her happiness is his only goal; when he misses it, life has become meaningless and barren for him. A better judge of men than Ole, he at once perceives the danger to Aagot resulting from frequent contact with the clever, superficially brilliant, but unprincipled Irgens. He does not have the heart to warn her or Ole in plain language and his roundabout ways prove ineffective. Though endowed with a keen insight into human nature, which is considerably quickened by his secret love for Aagot, he is unable to cope with the situation and forestall disaster, for like many of Hamsun's characters enjoying the especial sympathy of the author,

he is an unpractical man. In his tender, unselfish devotion to Aagot and his grief over her ruin, he is a quaint, pathetic figure.

Coldevin holds "that the women, in the very first place, should endeavor to make themselves useful in their homes. It is altogether wrong that the women care less and less for making a home for husband and children. They prefer a den by themselves if thereby they can make themselves what they call independent. They, too, must fit themselves out with eye-glasses; if they cannot do any better, they go to some commercial college."²³

But it is not the women alone who are at fault. "It would be inexact to say that men and women are depraved, they only have become shallow and empty to a certain degree, they are small and degenerate. New soil, meager soil, without fertility and vigor. And the women, too, live along easily, without at all tiring of life, but also without staking anything. But how could they possibly stake anything? They possess nothing which they could stake. They squirm around like blue flames, like so many will-o'-the-wisps, they nibble a little of everything, both joys and sorrows, and they are not conscious of the fact that they are becoming insignificant. They have ceased cherishing lofty ambitions, and their hearts cause them little trouble, they beat lively enough, but expand not more for one thing than for the other, not more for one man than for the other. And what has become of the pride in the eyes of our young women? There was a great deal of delicate meaning in those proud glances, but now-a-days one no longer meets them, they look just as kindly upon mediocrity as upon superiority. . . . Our young woman has lost her power, her rich and lovable simplicity, the great passion, the hall-mark of racial superiority. She has lost the genuine joy over the only man, her hero, her idol, she has been worn smooth, she is interested in anybody, and has a loving glance for everybody."²⁴

Coldevin declares that the Norwegian people are passing through a period of decline, only the commercial life shows vigor and enterprise. The young businessmen are far superior to those would-be poets that are nothing but parasites.

"In our country (Norway), literary men are accorded enormous significance by the people, literary achievement is the quintessence of the greatest and best we know. There are, perhaps, not

²³ *Verker*, III, *Ny Jord*, p. 119.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 204.

many countries on the globe where the whole intellectual and spiritual life is so completely in the hands of the literary man as in ours."²⁵

And what is worse, these men pose as experts in all fields of intellectual endeavor, no one challenges their authority, and the great poets of past ages are forgotten over the mediocrity of to-day.

"It is unfortunate that we lose sight of great achievements and proclaim the small as something grand. Just take a survey of our young people, the literary men included, they are clever enough, but. . . . Oh, yes, they are clever, they obtain results by laborious efforts; but they are never seized by any inspiration. And heavens, how economical they really are with their talents! They are parsimonious and dry and prudent. They write a verse and have it printed together with a few others. By painfully striving they produce a book now and then, conscientiously they scrape out each corner of their minds and obtain thereby remarkably good results. But they don't scatter anything broadcast, they throw no pearls into the dust of the highway. Formerly, the poets had a little to spare, you know; they could afford to be wasteful, they stood bubbling over and hurled ducats out of the window with glorious recklessness. What of it? They were still brimful of precious gold. Oh, no, our young authors are sensible and clever, they do not exhibit, like the poets of by-gone days, any superabundance, any tempestuous outbreak, or some amazing triumphal display of primeval power."²⁶

The merchant class is the only one which seems to have escaped the general deterioration and shows signs of future promise. This evaluation seems inconsistent with Hamsun's emphatic condemnation of materialism, but it must be kept in mind that the representatives of the merchant class depicted here are very unselfish idealists, imbued with a deep veneration for all spiritual values, and striving to attain them as far as possible. Their extremely modest opinions of themselves amount almost to self-effacement.

A reviewer recently stated that the chief characters of *Ny Jord* could have been suggested to Hamsun only by his contact with American environment and that there is many an Irgens, a Hanka, and an Aagot walking our streets. We probably could

²⁵ *Verker*, III, *Ny Jord*, p. 83.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 81.

muster an impressive contingent of light-headed, dissatisfied women, and arrogant, unscrupulous, pompous, and conceited individuals of the male sex posing as geniuses. But have we a monopoly of these types? If the characters in question could have been suggested only by the American environment, then Hamsun's novel would be worse than the very category of literary productions, brought forth by laborious efforts and ransacking every recess of the mind, which he so severely attacked. *Ny Jord* would then be an artificial concoction, brewed of heterogeneous elements. Hamsun would have, moreover, inflicted a serious wrong upon certain classes of Christiania society by making the capital of Norway the setting for characters, conditions, and events with which he had come in contact only across the ocean. There can be no doubt that Hamsun's experiences in the United States must have had a very strong influence upon him, but there is little in regard to subject matter and less in regard to his outlook upon life which can be traced back to America. No matter how subjective or objective he has been in *Ny Jord*, the actual conditions prevailing at that time at the capital of Norway furnished the groundwork for his novel.

As a matter of fact, there is no other city but Christiania where the characters, conditions, and events here dealt with are well conceivable. Christiania is the intellectual and literary center of the whole country, and Norway's literary production during the last hundred years has been enormous in proportion to the population and the resources of the country. To a lesser extent this holds true for the other Scandinavian countries also. Men like Ibsen and Björnson reaped honor and fame throughout the whole world. The Norwegian people could not help being flattered by this fact; national consciousness was elated by the circumstance that the country had produced authors of such magnitude. Norway, in turn, conferred honors on her great men, and a share of it was reflected upon all her sons and daughters engaged in the field of belles-lettres. Though the country possessed little economic and political power, in the realm of literature it could easily vie with the rest of the world.

Some poets and authors had, moreover, played important rôles in the Norwegian political life of the nineteenth century. We need to refer only to Henrik Arnold Wergeland and Bjørnstjerne Björnson. The latter, especially, was not only a poet and novelist,

but at the same time a most active politician, a leader and teacher of the people. Ibsen and Björnson, to some extent even Jonas Lie, debated moral and social problems in their dramas and novels, and others, like Arne Garborg and Amalie Skram, to mention only a few important names, cultivated the same field. To be sure, the pioneer in this category of literary production in Norway was Camilla Collett, Henrik Wergeland's gifted sister. *Amtmandens Døtre* (The Daughters of the Magistrate), 1854, was the first novel in the Norwegian language which set forth for discussion certain features of social life in Norway; but the problem play and the problem novel did not become the vogue until naturalism and the theories of heredity and environment came to the fore. Literature all at once seemed of tremendous importance to the general public, and the position of literary men was greatly enhanced in the esteem of the people, especially so in Christiania.

These were the conditions which Hamsun observed and they form the basis of his novel, *Ny Jord*. In his opinion, the claims of the Norwegian authors and poets were exaggerated, and he accorded, moreover, no place to the airing of any problem in novel or drama. The poets and authors of the time were too tame for him and the fact that they stood upon the shoulders of a democratic people did not increase their stature in his eyes. Competent judges have found that the local color in *Redaktør Lyng* and *Ny Jord* is very pale. As one should expect, Hamsun's fellow countrymen declared his portrayal of characters and conditions in *Ny Jord* as exaggerated and caricatured.

The technique in *Ny Jord* is good, the plot interesting and well worked out, the language highly polished. In this respect, *Ny Jord* comes nearer the conventional novel than most of the other works of Hamsun's earlier years and some critics give it, accordingly, very high rank.

IV

It cannot bear comparison with *Pan. Af Løjtnant Thomas Glahn's Papirer*, (Pan. From Papers Left by Lieutenant Thomas Glahn), 1894. Here Hamsun returned to the theme of baffled passion, treating it in the form of reminiscences recorded by the principal figure, Lieutenant Glahn, supplemented by a brief account of Glahn's slayer. The scene of action is remote from civilization, *Nordland* and the interior of India, respectively,

localities where events of the nature here described may come to pass without interference on the part of society or the authorities. Hamsun has still further increased the probability by fixing the date in the fifties of the nineteenth century. The story is very simple. Glahn has come to *Nordland* to hunt and to indulge his inclination for a primitive mode of life in the woods and the mountains by the sea-side, close to the heart of nature. He meets there Edvarda Mack, the only child of the most powerful and influential man in those remote parts. Edvarda becomes infatuated with Glahn, and he returns her passion. But Edvarda is a creature of moods and whims, and Glahn is eccentric, blunt, and erratic. Misunderstandings soon spring up between the two, which are augmented by mutual jealousy and a spirit of defiance. Glahn furnishes, indeed, ample cause for jealousy by his relations with Eva, a simple child of nature, who without thought or scruples obeys the dictates of her heart. In a very fantastical attempt to injure a rival for the affections of Edvarda, Glahn unwittingly causes Eva's death. Mack, her master and employer, whose advances she spurned, has placed her knowingly and deliberately, without compunctions of conscience, in the path of inevitable destruction. In spite of his remorse over his deed and its consequences, Glahn has not been able to master his passion for Edvarda and has not given up all hope. But she dismisses him with cold contempt. Soon after his departure, he learns that she has become the wife of another. He tries to convince himself that all this does not concern him in the least, but it is plain enough that he in vain tries to obliterate her memory by excesses and debauch. These facts we learn from his own account.

The events recorded by the man who slew Glahn reveal that Glahn sought death and deliberately goaded his adversary until the latter in blind rage fired the fatal shot.

Glahn has various traits in common with the nameless young author in *Sult*, but he is even more closely akin to Nagel, particularly in his attitude towards nature, his strange, erratic behavior, his inability to adjust himself to the conventions of society, contact with which he cannot forego, and in his belief that he can read the souls of men. There is also a similarity in the fate which both suffer, though Glahn is a man of action and by no means brilliant, while Nagle is essentially a dreamer and an unbalanced genius.

His dual affection for Edvarda and Eva, Glahn aptly characterizes in the following legend:

"A maiden sat imprisoned in a tower. She loved a lord. Why? Ask the wind and the stars, ask the god of life; for no one else knows such a thing. And the lord was her friend and lover; but time went on, and one nice day he saw another, and his heart was changed.

"He loved his girl like a youth. He often called her the bliss of his life and his dove, and her embrace was fiery and passionate. He said: Give me your heart! And she gave it to him. He said: Will you grant me my wish, beloved? And she answered in ecstasy: Yes. She gave him her all and yet he did not thank her.

"The other he loved like a slave, like a madman, and a beggar. Why? Ask the dust in the road and the leaves that fall, ask the enigmatic god of life: for none other knows such a thing. She gave him nothing, nothing at all, and yet he thanked her. She asked him: Give me your peace of mind and your reason! And he was only grieved that she did not demand his life."²⁷

The situation of a man wavering in his love between two women, one gentle, loving, and self-effacing, the other proud, coquettish, imperious, and cruel, occurs repeatedly in the works of Hamsun. The first instance of it we find in Nagel's affection divided between Dagny Kielland and Martha Gude. Glahn is, like Nagel, a defenceless victim of his infatuation. Characteristic for both is also a certain sentimentality in their feeling towards nature. The following passage is quite typical of Glahn's attitude.

"The monotonous hum and the familiar trees and rocks are more than I can bear, I am filled with a strange sense of gratitude, everything responds to me, blends with me, I love all beings. I take up a dry twig, hold it in my hand and keep looking at it, while I sit and ponder over my affairs; the twig is almost rotten, its crumbling bark deeply impresses me, compassion fills my heart. And when I at last get up, I do not hurl the twig away, but lay it down gently and look upon it with sympathy; finally before I leave it behind, I give it a parting glance with moist eyes."²⁸

²⁷ *Verker*, I, *Pan*, p. 93.

In Norwegian as in English, good usage requires the use of quotation marks at the beginning and the end of, and before and after a break in a direct statement, but Hamsun does not comply with this rule. His own punctuation has been preserved in all instances of this kind occurring in passages translated.

²⁸ *Verker*, I, *Pan*, p. 13.

Whenever he comes in contact with society, such as it is in those remote parts, he becomes embarrassed and awkward, acts rudely, inconsiderately, and erratically. Social life with its conventions and rules of conduct seems to him artificial and insincere. Alone in the woods or on the ocean, or with simple folk, he appears able and alert, but in his intercourse with people of the upper class, he reveals the mentality of a backward child. On a boat trip with Edvarda and some others, he becomes irritated by Edvarda's inattention, which he, indeed, brings abruptly to a close by throwing one of her shoes overboard, "from joy over her presence or from a desire to assert myself and remind her of the fact that I, too, was in existence—I do not know. It all happened so quickly, I did not think, I was simply moved by an impulse."²⁹ The presence of a suitor for the hand of Edvarda causes him to lose his self-control and paralyzes his mental faculties, and blind instinct alone prompts his behavior.

"I went up to the baron, leaned over him as if I wished to whisper something into his ear, and when I was close enough, I spit right into his ear. He was startled at my conduct and stared at me idiotically. Later, I noticed that he told Edvarda what had happened and that she was vexed. She probably thought of the shoe which I had thrown overboard, of the cups and glasses which I had the misfortune to break, of all the other offences against good breeding; all that was surely reviewed in her mind. I was ashamed, it was all over with me; wherever I turned, I met scared and astonished eyes, and I stole away from Sirilund without farewell, without thanks for the hospitality received."³⁰

His rude acts are not deliberate, he simply obeys an uncontrollable impulse and often repents of his deed as soon as he has committed it. But, like Nagel, he strives in vain to adapt himself to the manners of society. Though often inconsiderate and blunt, he has a desire to be fair. The latter seems, however, to be merely an emanation of his pride. One of his rivals is a young doctor who happens to be lame. Glahn, being able-bodied, thinks he has an unfair advantage over the doctor which he ought to eliminate out of self-respect, and so he deliberately puts a bullet through his own foot. In his relations to others, he is most irrational; in the solitude of forests and mountains, he is a changed being. It

²⁹ *Verker*, I, *Pan*, p. 38.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

is only in close communion with nature that Glahn finds supreme joy. All things created, animate and inanimate alike, are for him but fellow beings, which, to be sure, does not preclude the possibility of conflict and strife, especially as regards his fellow men. Natural phenomena lead his fancy to strange dreams and speculations. The aspect of the storm-swept shore is described and commented upon as follows:

"All was wrapped in a smoke-like spray. Earth and sky blended. The sea capered in distorted aerial dances, formed human figures, horses, and rent banners. I stood sheltered by an overhanging rock and was teeming with thoughts, my soul was intensely alert. God knows, I thought, what it is that I am witnessing to-day and why the sea is laid open to my eyes. Perhaps, I behold at this moment the innermost part of the brains of the earth, how things work there, how all is seething! . . . A skerry was lying far out, all by itself; when the sea swept over this skerry, it reared up like a gigantic screw gone mad, no, like an ocean god it rose dripping into the air and looked out over the earth, snorting so fiercely that hair and beard stood out around his head like a wheel. Then he again disappeared in the breakers."³¹

A more peaceful mood of nature prompts an outbreak of gratitude:

"Thanks for the lonely night, the mountains, the hum of the darkness, and the sea which speak to my heart. Thanks that I am living, for the air I breathe, for the bliss of living in such a night, I render thanks with all my heart. Hear ye, East and West, just listen now! It is the eternal God! This quiet which whispers at my ears is the blood of the universe, which is pulsing; it is God, who permeates the world and myself. I see a glittering spider's thread in the light of my fire, I hear the sound of oars from a boat on the sea, and the northern lights break upon the sky. Ah, upon my immortal soul, I am, indeed, very grateful that it is I who am sitting here."³²

Passages like this one are frequent in *Pan* and with their depth of feeling and strange atmosphere of mystic emotion, they constitute the most essential feature of the entire work. It is the summer of *Nordland* with its midnight sun which here has found expression. For a few brief months it engenders an intensity of

³¹ *Verker*, I, *Pan*, p. 5.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 77.

life, an exuberance of energy, which are bewildering. All nature responds blindly, heedlessly, to the touch of summer's magic, man is but a part of nature and is subjected to the potent spell like all the rest. Instincts and passions hold sway over his life, his senses are feverishly alert, only to relapse into torpor with the advent of winter.

This all is seen through the eyes of a man who is essentially the product of culture, has a wide horizon and some critical insight. Glahn is, moreover, strongly given to introspection, reflection, and analysis. No matter how closely he lives to nature and how simple his needs and mode of existence, he is not at all a primitive man. All these traits, inclinations, and characteristics make him appear quite akin to Knut Hamsun, the poet. Though written in prose, *Pan* is above all else a highly poetic production of great originality, and an epitome of the northern summer. It is not a novel, but essentially a prose lyric.

The title suggests a certain analogy in the nature and mode of life of Glahn to the naive, idyllic existence of Pan, the nature god of Greek mythology. This does, however, not extend beyond the close communion of Glahn with all objects of nature and the elemental simplicity of his character. The tranquil, sensuous, drowsy *dolce far niente* of the Greek Pan is as foreign to him as it is incompatible with the stern grandeur of *Nordland*. Glahn is in every fibre a Norseman and, moreover, a modern man, who only by spells succeeds completely in abandoning himself to the charm of the wild, and even then not without reflecting. In spite of all his primitiveness, Glahn approaches nature through the medium of modern civilization and culture. It has a message for him which the simple native of *Nordland* could perceive and comprehend only in a remote fashion.

V

Hamsun has often spoken with disdain of dramatic art, a fact which is somewhat surprising since this domain is by no means inaccessible to him. Critics differ in regard to the technical perfection of his plays—Hamsun has written half a dozen of them—but, with one exception, they are well adapted to the stage and are not without emotional appeal.

In 1895, there appeared *Ved Rikets Port* (At the Gates of the Kingdom), the first of a cycle of three dramas which constitute a

trilogy. The plot is far from elaborate, but the technique is good and the dialogue natural and life-like, though the theme is rather abstract.

Ivar Kareno, a young scholar and independent thinker, has arrived at conclusions greatly at variance with the views of the established authorities. He depends on his pen for his livelihood, but cannot find a paying publisher. Just now he is in dire financial straits, but as optimistic as a child. One of his former teachers, at the present numbered among his opponents, is human enough to make an attempt to lead Kareno gently back into his fold, holding out the hope of a well-filled manger in the form of a favorable contract with his own publisher and a substantial stipend, but suggests that Kareno must modify some of his tenets. Kareno tries his best to satisfy him, finds himself, however, unable to accomplish this without betraying his dearest convictions, and this he will never do. His friend, Jerven, who adheres to the same views, has forced himself to recant. He is engaged to be married and needs the goodwill of the powers that be. As a consequence, Kareno breaks off all relations with him, and Jerven's betrothed, a rather exacting young lady of an idealistic turn of mind, does likewise. They cannot forgive Carsten Jerven that he has betrayed his convictions.

Kareno has been married for three years. His wife, the daughter of a rich, but bigoted farmer, chafes under the economic difficulties, but still more under Kareno's neglect of her. Mrs. Kareno is young and sensual, has little patience with his absorption in his philosophic problems and suspects him of being enamoured of their maid. When Endre Bondesen—we made his acquaintance in *Redaktør Lynge* as a vociferous liberal, but he has for mercenary reasons now become a stanch conservative—crosses Mrs. Kareno's path, she at once starts to flirt with him desperately, simply to make Kareno jealous, but with no success. Mrs. Elina Kareno is thereby actually driven into Bondesen's arms, and when Kareno at last becomes alarmed and tries to regain her affections, it is too late. She leaves him and he has to face the sheriff all by himself, when he comes to attach his few belongings.

The whole action requires less than forty-eight hours, and Mrs. Kareno's acquaintance with Bondesen is even of still briefer duration, yet the development which the play presents, does not seem improbable. It would have been a most easy matter for Hamsun

to make Elina's step but the climax of relations which began much earlier; instead, he chose to emphasize the fact that she does not know Bondesen even by name. Elina Kareno belongs to a type not infrequent in the works of Hamsun. She is not weak and naive, Bondesen does not seduce her, no matter what his intentions and efforts are; she surrenders herself knowingly and almost deliberately to him in blind obedience to the sexual instinct. In her relations to Kareno, she reminds one faintly of Rita in Ibsen's *Lille Eyolf*.

The play seems true to life, it might even be regarded as a naturalistic drama. The author does not moralize, comment, or explain. Some details are left intentionally unexplained, as, for instance, the significance of Kareno's preoccupation with Ingeborg, the maid. Of his iconoclastic theories we catch only a glimpse, but it is sufficient to convince us of his daring individualism. The following indicates his attitude towards labor:

"The laborers have not only become superfluous as a source of energy, but they have also lost their position as an indispensable class. When they were slaves, they did their part, they worked. Now machines driven by steam, electricity, water, or wind do the work in their place, and the laborers have become a more and more superfluous class. The slaves became laborers and the laborers parasites, henceforth no longer with any mission in life. And the various states besides strive to elevate into a political party those people who, indeed, have lost their position as an essential group. My dear humanists, do not coddle the laborers, nay, protect us others against their existence, prevent them from thriving, exterminate them."³³

And here we have his general philosophy in a nutshell:

"The rule of the majority is a doctrine that will do for the Englishmen, a gospel revealed in the market-place and preached on the London docks, made right and law by mediocrity. . . . All think it so beautiful, the idea of permanent peace; I declare it a doctrine befitting the calf's brain that conceived it. Yes, I ridicule permanent peace with its unblushing lack of pride. Let war come, it is not a question of saving a certain number of lives, for the source of life is inexhaustible; but it is a question of preserving the dignity of the human soul." He emphatically rejects

³³ *Verker*, VI, *Ved Rikets Port*, p. 12.

"that liberalism which has revived the old fallacy that the masses, measuring two ells in stature, shall elect their leaders, men three ells tall. . . . I believe in the born master, the natural despot, the real commander, in him who in no shape or manner is elected, but who establishes himself as leader over the hordes populating our globe. I believe in and hope for only one thing, the resurrection of the great terrorist, the essence of mankind, Caesar."³⁴

In short, Kareno believes in Friedrich Nietzsche's ideal of the superman. Hamsun's own attitude towards the masses is, on the whole, one of compassion, but he does not believe that democracy will promote the welfare of the people. His political ideal, we must infer, would be that of the enlightened and benevolent despot.

The passages here quoted might convey the impression that the play is full of such declarations and abstract theories, but such is decidedly not the case, and the few utterances of this kind are most skilfully woven into the dialogue. They, moreover, are called forth in the most natural manner by the situations and not merely dragged in to air certain views. The purely human elements are by far the most important part of the drama.

Livets Spil (Life's Play), 1896, does not deal with theories at all; human frailties, emotions, and fierce passions hold the center of the stage. We find Ivar Kareno now, ten years after the events of the first part, in *Nordland* as the humble tutor of the children of Mr. Osterman, a landed proprietor, but chiefly interested in the pursuit of his philosophic speculations and scientific investigations. Osterman not only leaves him a free hand, he even builds a sort of laboratory for Kareno and promises to publish at his expense the results of Kareno's studies. In blasting for the foundations of the laboratory, marble is discovered. Osterman has hitherto been very liberal and benevolent, but the greater wealth now put into his possession changes his character completely. He sells the marble deposit for a goodly sum. As the vein is worked, it becomes evident that it is far more extensive than at first surmised. Osterman might have exacted a much higher price, or might have reaped even greater profits if he had worked it himself. The fact that he missed this chance to acquire real wealth unbalances his mind; he becomes a miser of the worst sort in spite of his increased

³⁴ *Verker*, VI, *Ved Rikets Port*, pp. 70 f.

prosperity and brings ruin upon himself and his children. Tormented by the fear that Kareno will compel him to make good his promise to pay for the publication of his voluminous opus, he sets fire to the laboratory, a structure of wood and glass, after he has barricaded the door to forestall any attempt of rescuing the manuscript, and his two sons, who unknown to him are within, perish in the flames. Almost simultaneously, his daughter Teresita is accidentally shot to death by a half-witted vagabond beggar.

It appears from this summary that Osterman is the chief figure in the play, but this is only partially true. Teresita and the telegraph operator Jens Spir, who is hopelessly infatuated with Osterman's daughter, are at least of equal importance. Kareno, however, is crowded somewhat into the background. Teresita is an enigmatic character. She knows no law or obligation save her own desires and passions. In her infatuation for Kareno, she does not hesitate to expose dozens of human lives to almost certain destruction. She cruelly torments the unwelcome suitor, Jens Spir, who gradually assumes an attitude of cold disdain, and in the end their relations turn into a duel of fierce hate, notwithstanding the fact that Spir's devotion never falters. Upon Teresita's death, he ends his life by his own hand. The unfortunate lover reminds us somewhat of the doctor in *Pan*.

For Teresita, obedience to her passion is not sin. When a sectarian warns her: "Sin no more," she replies: "Sin no more? Oh, thou slave of God, I don't sin. I obey a higher being. I am unceasingly seeking it far and wide."³⁵ Kareno is at first indifferent to her, but ultimately he falls under the sway of her strange personality and forgets his beloved philosophy, only to be discarded by her after a brief spell. Teresita tells him: "You were not the man I thought you to be, Kareno. I have already previously told you so. You are human like all the rest, full of simple and silly sensuality. I am tired of you. Great heavens! Do you think I was in love with your Laplander's face and your spindly legs? No, surely, you are not a beauty. But you were so quiet, I believed you were full of something from a world beyond, for your face impressed me. But in the end you disappointed me."³⁶

This strange, unbridled woman possesses great fascination for all men, even the engineer who superintends the marble quarry

³⁵ *Verker*, VI, *Livets Spil*, p. 51.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

would for her sake depart from the path of rectitude, though he has spurned a liberal bribe. A morbid curiosity leads her to play, in turn, with the several men with whom she comes in contact. There are many mystical, haunting suggestions in the drama, strange actions and puzzling figures, for instance, the feeble-minded vagabond Thy, through whose hands Teresita loses her life. People call him "Justice." He has something on his mind, but in spite of his repeated efforts to speak out, we do not learn what he really has to say. Some acts and events are also obscure in their significance or motives, for example, the sudden arrival of Elina Kareno. As far as this character is concerned, we learn only that she now has become a sheer wanton, destitute of all sense of shame. But her visit serves the dramatic purpose of bringing out the unscrupulousness of Teresita. It also terminates the wavering attitude of Kareno towards the latter.

The third act, a market scene, introduces many incoherent incidents and irrelevant characters. But there is none the less progress in the main action, the central figures are further effectively characterized, and we are given a realistic, interesting picture of life in *Nordland*. The play as a whole does not lack unity and is pervaded from the beginning to the end by an atmosphere of violent passion and uncanny mystery. It concludes with the exclamation of Kareno: "Wise Nemesis!" He accepts the destruction of his life's work as a just punishment of his transgression, i.e., the desertion of his self-appointed task for the love of Teresita. As far as he is concerned, we can accept his verdict, but Teresita, Osterman, and Jens Spir are governed in their actions by forces of overwhelming magnitude. They must be considered virtually insane, and moral responsibility and justice, therefore, cease. It is a beneficent, perhaps we may say, wise provision of nature that she from the start implants the germ of destruction into the malformations which she creates, but here justice does not enter into consideration.

In regard to Kareno's philosophy there is but one utterance of importance. "Our conceptions are nothing absolute," he declares. "Since, accordingly, there is for us nothing absolute, I just as soon may enthrone some 'chimera,' command it to exist as a fact, give it validity, crown it."³⁷ He appears here half an ardent seeker after

³⁷ *Verker*, VI, *Livets Spil*, p. 7.

truth, half a fool in the garb of the philosopher. He is aware that he may be following a false lead, but he defends himself, saying: "Goethe esteemed more highly those who went astray, pursuing their own paths than those who went right, following the ways laid out by others." In a manner, Kareno has made progress, for when we first met him, he was blind to the fact that his views had only relative validity. But, like Nagel, he is still "the opponent of all."

In *Aftenrøde* (Sunset), 1898, this element of doubt has grown in Kareno. He has now reached fifty, but is still groping, undergoing development, as he calls it. We find him once more at the capital seeking a stipend, as poor as ever. But Elina Kareno has by the death of her parents come into the possession of a large fortune. The two are once more united, and there is now a child of ten in the family. Sara is really Bondesen's daughter, Kareno still balks against acknowledging her as his own, but he comes to it by degrees. His views of life in general have undergone a great change, but he is still hesitating whether or not he ought to renounce publicly his conclusions of twenty years ago. Strong ties as yet unite him with the past, for he is the leader of a society composed of radicals. A young firebrand, Tare by name, who regards the early works of Kareno as more sacred and infallible than the Bible, repeatedly arouses the old enthusiasm in his master, but at last Kareno succumbs to other influences. Elina Kareno ensnares him by surrounding him with mere physical comfort, and Bondesen, who in spite of his former relations with Elina still frequents the house, holds out to him the hope of political success and, indeed, makes good his promise. In the closing act a deputation appears to notify Kareno of his nomination, and Tare, true to the former teachings of his master, makes his election virtually a certainty by an attempt to shoot Kareno as a traitor to the cause of liberty, justice, and truth. Tare's action serves also to cure Kareno of a lingering sympathy for the views of the younger generation.

The plot of the third part, as that of the first, shows unity of action, the technique is skilful, the development rapid, almost beyond the realm of probability. The play is full of keen satire and bitter irony. Bondesen's motives for pushing the candidacy of Kareno are entirely personal and spring from a most ridiculous cause. He has now transferred his attention from Mrs. Kareno to her maid, who at the same time is intimate with Jerven, Kare-

no's old opponent, now a dignified professor and candidate for re-election. Bondesen surprises Jerven in the company of the maid and avenges himself for the encroachment upon his domain by bringing about Jerven's defeat. Miss Hovind, the one-time fiancée of Jerven, who in her youthful idealism broke off the engagement because he betrayed his convictions, has since had plenty of time to repent of her rashness, but as she has never come in contact with Jerven, she has thus far not found any opportunity to rectify her mistake. When she meets him again, at the house of Karenos, she at once becomes personal and tender. At first it seems that her efforts will go unrewarded. But Bondesen has alluded in his paper to certain indiscretions of Jerven and thereby has imperiled the latter's reputation. To restore himself in the eyes of the world, Jerven professes that he has sought the company of the maid solely to learn from her when he might find at the home of the Karenos his old love, Miss Hovind, for whom he has been pining these twenty years. Even Bondesen, though himself a master in the art of prevarication, must acknowledge that Jerven has done here a magnificent stroke. Regard for appearances and conventions, not principles, govern all these good people. Mrs. Karenos, however, surpasses them all in unconscious hypocrisy and prudishness. In spite of her marital infidelities and outright dissolute mode of life, or perhaps just because of them, she has now so far advanced in her regard for propriety that she feels shocked when Karenos exchanges in her presence his dressing gown for his coat; horrified she covers Sara's face when a young painter exhibits a picture in which there is a young girl lying on her back, pointing one foot into the air, and she feels scandalized when she hears of the misconduct of her maid. Like Tolstoy she has become ever more virtuous, now that vice has lost its charm for her, Nagel would say.

More interesting perhaps than this clever satire are the revelations in regard to the earlier views of Karenos. Tare knows whole passages from the writings of his master by heart and quotes him at length. These utterances represent indisputably Hamsun's own opinions.

"What do you demand of the young? To honor the aged. But why? These teachings were invented by decrepit old age itself. When the old could no longer hold their own in the battle of life, they by no means went into hiding, but spread themselves on the loftiest seats and bade the young to honor them and do

them homage. And when the young obeyed, the old sat there on high like large, sexless birds and nodded their heads with delight over the obedience of the young. You young ones! Place a bomb under the seat of the aged, clear it, and occupy it yourselves. For yours is the power and the honor eternally.

"Wherein are the old superior to you? In experience. Experience in all its poverty and nakedness. How does this experience benefit you, since each one must experience anew all he happens to encounter in his life personally? Alas, never yet has my experience been the benefit to you which you imagine. Blow up this old lie.

"When old age speaks, youth shall keep silent. Why? Because the old have said so. Thus the old live protected and care-free at the expense of the young. The hearts of the old are dead for everything except hatred toward the new and the young. And in their worn out brains there is still energy enough for one idea, a clever invention: that the young shall honor toothless old age. But while the young are hindered and crushed by this cynical doctrine, the victors sit and boast over this peerless invention and hold that life is arranged to perfection.

"A man is physically and mentally old when he reaches fifty. He puffs when he has to tie his shoe strings, he has to take a rest when he has compiled a book. If he has a reputation, he has after that time to try to preserve this reputation by means of agents the country over. He has his henchmen in foreign countries, his agent in Germany, in England, in France, but especially important is his agent in Germany. And the old man himself goes about and imagines he is young. In order to keep up with the times, he spies upon the art of the young and secretly reads their books. He does not read them to delight his soul with the new he meets, he does it in order to learn and imitate,—honor be to the old man for this! If the young have found a new way, the old man whispers to himself: that way I, too, can follow. And if his agent in Germany is a man who knows his duty, he will get it established immediately in a widely read paper that it was his grand old man who first—first of all—discovered the new way. And the old man will find it very nice to be half a hundred.

"Why do you tolerate this lie, you young ones? Why don't you go out on the street, single out the man of fifty and say to him: Out

of the way, old chap! I am younger than you are. Your life is ended, make room for mine. Die with God!"³⁸

Ivar Karenø is now himself a man of fifty and in obedience to the laws of nature, he has undergone the inevitable change. Or may one escape it? Most certainly. We meet in Leo Høibro, Hamsun's spokesman in *Redaktør Lynge*, a man who has passed fifty and still stands as erect at his old post as ever.

The whole trilogy is very ably epitomized in the following lines:

Vi saa ham sky de Saler hvor andre søkte Ly,
de Sokler andre fandt det stolt at staa paa.
Han svinget sig en Morgen som en Ørn op mot Sky,
man skrek til ham og holdt sig fast og saa paa.
Og ingenting var over ham,
blot Dagningen i Østerled, de nye Tidens Gry.

Vi saa ham staa deroppe og vise Folket Vei
igjennem høie, ideale Riker.
Man kaldte ham til Jord igjen, hans Svar var altid Nei,
hans Sjæl var døv for Trusel, Bøn og Smiker.
. . . . Saa faldt han da i Alders Dag
og rystet vist sit Hode ad sit Ungdomslivs Galei.

Vi saa ham skyndsomt søke sig Ly bak Salens Dør
og krype Soklen op med Baand om Foten.
Der staar han nu og kaster sin Skygge med Honnør
og rotner som et livløst Træ paa Roten.
Men selv saa tror den gamle Ørn
at nu—nu staar han gjævere end nogensinde før.*

It will hardly do to interpret the trilogy as an admission on the part of Hamsun that his own views have changed and that, in a measure, he repudiates the ideals of his youth. But he has become

³⁸ *Verker*, VI, *Aftenrøde*, pp. 31 f.

*We saw him shun the places where others shelter sought, / The pedestals that others were standing on with pride. / He rose on one bright morning like an eagle to the sky, / They called to him, held firmly on, and gazed. / And nothing was above him then / But breaking morn in eastern sky, the dawn of the new time.

We saw him stand there loftily, pointing out the way / To dazzling heights and realms ideal. / They called him down to earth again, he answered ever nay, / His soul was deaf to prayer, threat, and fawning. / But then old age upon him came / And wisely shook its head at all the joyous follies of his youth.

We saw him quickly seeking shelter within the hall / And crawl upon the pedestal with fettered feet. / There now he stands, with honor casts his shadow he afar / And rots just like a lifeless tree still on its stump. / But this eagle grey himself believes / That now, indeed, he loftier stands than any time before.

less optimistic in regard to the possibility of realizing them, because the great majority of men renounce their earlier convictions as they grow older. In many instances men actually change their views, but selfish considerations are the most important factor in bringing about the transformation. Kareno's tenets and experiences are out of the ordinary, but his development is typical. Men more or less reluctantly sacrifice their convictions by degrees, compromise and make peace with the reactionary forces which control civilization. They become weary of the seemingly hopeless struggle, their faith is shaken, the desire for success, influence, power, and comfort contributes its share, and in the end they capitulate. Very few wait until they have passed fifty like Kareno. Ibsen claimed in "Comedy of Love" that the common run of men sacrifice their ideals to materialistic considerations as soon as they establish a family, and it is not without significance that Jerven betrays his cause to enable him to marry, just as the young journalist in Garborg's *Uforsonlige* (Irreconcilables), and that Kareno wrecks his domestic happiness by his refusal to yield.

While he succumbs to the operation of a law which is well nigh universal in its application, Hamsun regards him with bitter irony. His sympathy is not with Kareno, the man of fifty, but with Tare, the young man of twenty-nine. He also furnishes proof, as it were, that a man may remain loyal to his cause and ideals in spite of advancing years by introducing Høibro, the "comet without orbit," who at fifty-one still unflinchingly adheres to the views of his earlier years. Kareno's fate simply illustrates the following remarks of our friend Coldevin:

"The people should not rely too much on their leaders, quite on the contrary; the young people should be our hope. No, the leaders buckle under many a time. It is an old law that a leader comes to a stand-still when he reaches a certain age; nay, indeed, he turns about and obstructs progress. Then the young ones must oppose him, force him to retreat, or trample him under foot."³⁹

There is no indication in these three plays that Hamsun's views on these matters have changed in the least.

VI

Between the publication of *Livets Spil* and *Aftenrøde* there appeared a collection of thirteen short stories and sketches under

³⁹ *Verker*, III, *Ny Jord*, p. 49.

the general title *Siesta*, 1897. In three, the theme is taken from peasant life, two deal with abnormal psychology. *Reiersen av "Sydstjærnen"* (Captain Reiersen of the "South Star") is artistically the best. *Litt Paris* (Glimpses of Paris) contains interesting observations, which are, however, strongly at variance with the approved version of the present day. The final sentence: "Vice, corruption, and yet beauty and power," sums up the contents. It must be borne in mind that Hamsun is anything but a moralist, he abstains also here from condemnation, though he observes that in Paris life the old conceptions of morality are completely upset.

Victoria. En Kjærligheds Historie (Victoria. A Love Story), 1898, of the same year as *Aftenrøde*, stands all by itself in the long series of works by Knut Hamsun. The chief male character, to be sure, bears the stamp of the author's own personality; he, like his predecessors, clashes with society and its unwritten laws, but succeeds in adjusting himself without betraying his innermost being. Only in his love he suffers disaster. In poetic quality *Victoria* vies with *Pan*. We find long passages of lyric prose in both, the beauty of which is hard to surpass, but they have nothing in common with regard to the general atmosphere. *Victoria* is only a simple love story in prose. But what a prose where the author is at his best! The theme itself does not contribute anything to the charm of this brief tale; it is indeed old and hackneyed: two youthful lovers are separated by the insuperable barriers of social conventions and economic circumstances. The young man, Johannes, is the son of a humble miller, Victoria the daughter of the proud master of the neighboring castle. Hamsun intentionally leaves his readers somewhat in the dark about the exact social status of this old aristocrat. Johannes and Victoria have grown up together, have been playmates, and have come to love each other long before they reached adolescence. To save her lavish father from utter ruin, Victoria consents to marry a rich suitor. During the period of her engagement, she confesses to Johannes that she loves him, only to send him away on the next day because the whole thing is impossible, even though Johannes has made a man of himself and has already achieved fame as a poet. At the eleventh hour fate seems to intervene. The rich suitor, forced upon Victoria by her father, loses his life by an accident, but it is too late. Johannes has become engaged to a young girl of wealthy

parents, whom he in her childhood saved from drowning. It is gratitude, not love, which prompts Camilla to accept Johannes, and when she falls in love with another, he does not make an effort to hold her. Victoria he has not seen since the death of the young heir to whom she was engaged, in fact, he has avoided her. She has pined away, vainly longing to catch but a glimpse of Johannes. And now he learns that she has just died and receives her farewell letter, in which she pours forth her love with intense fervor, utmost candor, and deep pathos. The letter forms the conclusion of the story, not a single word of comment is added, a device which produces a very strong effect.

The two main characters are skilfully drawn. Victoria is the more interesting of the two. Social conventions and prejudices influence her conduct, but the deciding factor is that she must choose between her love and her duty to her father. At times Victoria almost succumbs in the struggle against her affection; again and again she can save herself only by wounding the feelings of Johannes most deeply through affecting an air of coldness, pride, and disdain. Only when the certainty of near death makes restraint needless, she reveals the depth and beauty of her love.

Johannes is of stronger clay, love is not the sole content of his life, as it is for Victoria. He survives the cruel blow which fate inflicts upon him—how, we are left to surmise—but he has the strength and courage to work. We may safely assume that he has much in common with the author himself, certainly as far as his literary productions are concerned. One of these is characterized in the following manner:

"The great book had come out, a whole kingdom, a little, stirring world of moods, emotions, voices, and visions."⁴⁰ Hamsun surely himself has written a number of works to which this definition applies. To what extent personal experiences of the author form the basis of *Victoria*, it is hard to say.

Through a certain impetuosity and eccentricity, Johannes reminds one of Nagel. In other words, he belongs to the great number of characters that are typical for Hamsun. Love is for Johannes the great enigma of life, and he indulges in many speculations and dreams about it. It is to him, as to Hamsun, an elemental passion, a blind, inexorable force, implanted in man by nature; through it he experiences the most supreme joy and the most

⁴⁰ *Verker*, I, *Victoria*, p. 42.

abject sufferings. It is never far remote from its physiological basis, never severed from the sexual instinct.

"What is love, indeed? A breeze whispering among the roses, a yellow phosphorescence burning in the blood. Love is an infernal music which gets even old men to dance. It is like the marguerite which opens up wide at the approach of night, and it is like the anemone which closes when breathed upon and dies when touched.

"Such is love.

"It can ruin a man, raise him again, and brand him in turn; it can favor me to-day, you to-morrow, and a third one to-morrow night; so fickle it is. But it can also hold as firmly as an unbreakable seal, and burn as inextinguishable flame to the very hour of death, so eternal it is. How then is love?

"Oh, love is a summer night with stars in the sky and fragrance on earth. But why does it make the youth walk on hidden paths, and why does it make the old man stand gazing on tip-toe in his lonely room? Alas, love changes a man's heart into a mushroom bed, wherein are thriving secretive and impudent toadstools.

"Does it not cause the monk to climb into walled-in gardens and press his eyes against the windows of sleeping persons in the dead of night? And does it not instil madness into nuns, and destroy the reason of princesses? It lays the head of the king to the ground so that his hair drags in the dust of the highway, and the while he is whispering obscene words to himself and is sticking out his tongue.

"Such is love.

"But no, it is very different, indeed, and nothing in this world is like it. It comes, as a spring-night descends upon the earth, when a youth beholds two eyes. He sees and stares. He kisses a pair of lips, and then it seems as though two flames met in his heart, a sun which blazes forth towards a star. He is enfolded by two arms, and then he neither hears nor sees anything in this world any longer.

"Love was God's first word, the first thought which passed through his brain. When he said: Let there be light! it was love which sprang forth. And all he had created was very good, and he wanted nothing of it undone again. And love became the source of life and the ruler of life, but all its paths are full of flowers and blood, flowers and blood."⁴¹

⁴¹ *Verker*, I, *Victoria*, pp. 19 f.

The love of Victoria is of the loftier kind, though by no means anaemic or etherial; it enobles in spite of all the sufferings it brings. It has been said that Victoria's passion is "strong enough for death, but not strong enough for life." While this is true, Victoria is not a weak character. But the conflicting forces are so powerful that destruction in some form or other could be the only outcome of the struggle. She herself declares: "You ought to know how I have loved you, Johannes. I have not been able to show it to you, there were so many obstacles in my path, and, first and foremost, my own nature prevented me."⁴²

Her fate would have differed only in outward circumstances, if she had become united with Johannes, for she never could have overcome the barriers which social conditions had raised between them.

VII

From 1890 to 1898 Hamsun published ten works of fiction. It was four years before his next production, *Munken Vendt* (*Brigantines Saga I*) (Friar Vendt, The Brigantine's Saga I), appeared. *Munken Vendt* is a drama in eight acts, composed in sonorous, rhymed verse, with the exception of the poems, which are few in number, the only work from the pen of Hamsun not written in prose. Rhyme and meter are good, and the verse flows along in a natural, virtually perfect cadence. And yet the drama does not surpass, for instance, *Pan* and *Victoria* in poetic quality, and the language is not as pithy as that of most other works of the author, though it is very close to the vernacular of the people. The production was not primarily intended for the stage, that much is self-evident. The fact that eight acts are strung together as one whole is of less importance; there is a natural division between the fifth and the sixth act. To be sure, if we make this division, the first part is still too long for one performance. In several of the acts there is, moreover, a frequent change of scene. The third and fourth acts require each three, the fifth and eighth even four different settings. For a modern stage of first rank these difficulties are not insurmountable, but they are none the less an obstacle. Considered as a dramatic poem, *Munken Vendt* is a work of the highest merits, though the ideas set forth in this play must necessarily provoke violent opposition in many quarters. It consti-

⁴² *Verker*, I, *Victoria*, p. 90.

tutes, at least so far, the last outbreak of Hamsun's rebellious spirit, and it is altogether unlikely that any others will follow, since there has been a decided change, not in the views of Hamsun, but in his attitude towards life. He has not made any compromise like Karen, he apparently stands where he stood at the outset, but he has ceased to storm and rage against existing conditions, recognizing the futility of such a procedure.

The hero of the play is a former student of theology, the illegitimate son of a merchant up in *Nordland*. His parents are now both dead, and Didrik, the half-brother of Munken Vendt,⁴³ is continuing his father's business and his mode of life. Munken Vendt has thrown up his studies and has returned to the place of his birth to live as a hunter. He is a young man full of energy, unable to bear any restraint, disdainful, not only of all conventions, but even of a well-ordered mode of life, liberal to a fault, reckless, improvident, and withal a great rogue. Of course, he drinks heavily, but without injury to his iron constitution. His good looks and merry, witty nature make him a great favorite with women. Even Iselin, the richest girl in those parts, an orphan and mistress of her hand and fortune, falls in love with him, but he scorns her advances. His heart belongs to Blis, a poor girl in the employ of Didrik, by whom she is seduced. On the point of starving to death, Munken Vendt promises to marry Inger, the daughter of a well-to-do Laplander, who, moreover, has discovered a treasure unlawfully acquired and hidden by Dyre, the father of Blis, a shrewd and miserly old fellow. So Munken Vendt comes in possession of it. When he, however, breaks his promise to Inger, her father wants to shoot him, but by a mistake kills Dyre.

Munken Vendt is accused, when the court is in session, of having tampered, out of sheer spite, with Didrik's scales and is convicted, though entirely innocent. He escapes with the assistance of Iselin, and we find him later in a parish further south, where he has acquired a place as sexton. He has turned over a new leaf, and apparently intends to lead now an orderly life and to make restitution where he has wronged others. Munken Vendt is good at heart and really never stoops to any base action. He has already hired a messenger to carry back to Inger her treasure, which he, of necessity, had to take with him in his flight, when the sheriff

⁴³ "Munken" is an appellation, inseparable from the other name of its bearer. It would hardly do to translate it by "friar."

appears to arrest him because of the verdict rendered against him. Munken Vendt again gets away, taking the treasure along a second time, only to fall into the hands of the law in the large city to which he has gone. It is Didrik, his half-brother and enemy, who causes his apprehension.

About twenty years later, Munken Vendt, having served his sentence, returns again to the place of his birth, just in time to buy Iselin's estate which is sold at a sheriff's sale. Iselin has married Didrik, as it appears for the sole reason that he was the only man of the neighborhood socially her equal. But he has suffered losses upon losses, and Iselin has become involved in his financial ruin. When Munken Vendt hears that an inquiry is to be made how he came into possession of his means, he turns over the estate just bought to Elias, the son of Dyre, once a petty scoundrel of the worst sort, now a religious zealot. Munken Vendt is still unbroken in health and spirit. In the penitentiary he has learned the shoemaker's trade, by which he now hopes to earn his livelihood.

Iselin loves him as passionately as ever, but he wounds her feelings and arouses her wrath. In her tyrannical manner, she has him tied to a tree in the woods for four long days and nights, that is, until certain seeds have sprouted in the soil placed in the palms of his hands. As the wife of Didrik, she is arbiter over the lives of the simple folk in the region. Munken Vendt, to be sure, does not acknowledge her authority, but he submits when he unexpectedly sees Alexa, the daughter of Blis and Didrik, the very image of her mother in her youth and a kind and innocent girl in her teens. For Munken Vendt, Alexa is a re-incarnation of Blis. Through Alexa he experiences over again the joy of his early love, and the resulting happiness is the greater, since his affection is entirely free from desire. This experience ends once for all the struggle between him and Iselin and his own inner conflict caused by his mingled feelings for her. The love of his youth rules supreme from the moment he beholds the young girl. His proud defiance has, however, a share in his decision to submit to the cruel verdict of Iselin. He accepts it as a challenge of his power of endurance. His courage never fails him during the ordeal, but he comes out of it partially maimed. Some months later, he sustains fatal injuries by a fall on the ice. When Iselin learns of it, she drowns herself.

The last months of Munken Vendt's existence are made supremely happy through the fact that he now and then catches a glimpse of his idol, Alexa. When he lies at the point of death, he eagerly longs for her presence. But she arrives too late. Fate, Providence, or God has always treated him cruelly, and he but expects that the fulfilment of his last, innocent wish should be denied him. He dies unbroken in spirit, defiant to the end. On his dead lips hovers a smile. All he leaves behind in this world is the discharge from the prison where he served time—not as a punishment for any of the wild pranks which he played, but as a penalty for offences which he never committed. Such is the bare outline of the plot. Love's bliss and torments are no small feature in this play, but not the most important one.

Already in *Sult* we found blasphemous utterances, rebellion against Providence. Munken Vendt is steeped in it, is the personification of defiance of the Supreme Being, a Prometheus, or Cain, or Lucifer. He is not an infidel, he believes there is a God who controls the universe, and when, on one occasion, he thinks that this God is meting out justice to him, he falls on his knees to render thanks. But he is quickly disillusioned. From his very birth he has suffered injustice, and he finds that injustice prevails in general. The doctrine that we must humbly accept our lot, he utterly rejects. It is our right, nay, our duty to rebel. If all the millions on earth in unison shrieked out their defiance, maybe God would be aroused from his lethargy, or desist from his tyranny. Submission to all the injustice, cruelty, and madness of life results but in the progressive degeneration of humanity. Since Christianity teaches such submission, Munken Vendt, of course, repudiates it. It is neither better nor worse than any other form of religious belief, a crutch for cripples.

"The old prophets were of various sorts, according to the accounts of different countries. They cooked and brewed and dished out to the people and thought they were serving the most excellent messes. But then came an expert in more refined viands. They saw his salad was fresher than that of the others, the fishermen of the country liked it especially. Therefore, the fishermen emigrated and fought for this salad to the finish. Some declared themselves better satisfied with it, others remained heretics for ever. Then courage rose in the hearts of these fishermen and they fought on to their souls' content. They chided and scolded the old cooks,

called them twaddlers and rascals. You are too stupid to feel ashamed of your doings, they said; what are you hanging up in front of the hearth? Things which are dumb and dead, sheep-bells and horseshoes, stuff and rubbish. No, here you shall behold something of different mettle! And so they hung up a murdered Jew instead. . . . But God sat in his clouds all the while and laughed at the farce and kept it agoing. And so he will do to the end of days, whenever future cooks turn up.”⁴⁴

The rascal Dyre thinks that the rich people make the laws and the clergy transform them into commandments from above, and we may infer that Hamsun does not wholly disagree with him.

Munken Vendt prefers for himself the pagan creed of his ancestors, with its cult of the heroic in man. With his dying breath he commands: “Hey—up with the horseshoe of our forefathers!” As his wish is carried out, he sits erect, gazing at the setting sun. “See, the sun goes down and makes night more placid. And the mill will run on to-morrow the same as ever,” is his final comment on life. The idea expressed here is identical with the one in the closing sentence in Hamsun’s latest novel. “Things big and little happen; a tooth out of the mouth, a man out of the ranks, a sparrow that drops dead to the ground.” We cannot see the meaning of it all, but life is good, and we should fight its battle bravely. This is Hamsun’s philosophy of life. “Death is the great redeemer of all,” and we should meet it fearlessly.

But this calm acceptance of the inevitable does not mean submission while we are in the midst of the fray. Munken Vendt declares repeatedly that misfortune and injustice cannot enoble; they degrade a man if he tamely yields. His is not the soul which can be purified by sufferings; his monomania for independence, for retaining the mastery of his own life, does not allow him to acknowledge that he is suffering, not even to his own self and much less to others. Providence or Fate may crush him, annihilate him, but cannot wrest from him the admission of defeat. On one occasion he compares himself aptly to the unrepentant thief on the cross. This indomitable pride is the chief reason why he spurns the love of Iselin, whom he really admires for her proud spirit which is akin to his own.

Munken Vendt is, at the bottom of his heart, kind and benevolent towards his fellow men, but at times he cannot suppress his

⁴⁴ *Verker*, VII, *Munken Vendt*, pp. 13 f.

contempt for the fawning, cringing, and slavish nature of the masses. For a God on high, they must be a sorry sight. What gratification can there be in ruling over a race of slaves? In the final analysis they can, however, not be made responsible for what they are. He assures Blis, for instance: "Your course was staked out. You followed it blindly. It was so ordained. But nothing whatever leads to destruction. So kindly devised and so splendid and clever is life—I mean, the harmony is so perfect that there is really not a single discord. Our task is to learn to know freedom and necessity, that youth and old age, rain and drought, goodness and evil—that all these are values of equal rank. We were allotted them from above in the beginning of time to use and enjoy. Not that they should bring sin upon our heads. You cannot sin by any power of your own. What evil you have done and the good you may have accomplished, was whispered and shall be whispered into your ear. And if you stumble—nay, fall head-long on your way, you only drop into the embrace of your fate."⁴⁵ Thus speaks the man of fifty. One might well doubt if he is really in earnest, for he relapses at once into mockery, sarcasm, and self-irony, were it not for the fact that Hamsun's own views and attitude towards life are virtually the same. Munken Vendt's blood, moreover, has in spite of his years not cooled sufficiently to enable him to live up to his own creed, which logically must lead to resignation. Rallery, irony, scorn, and hate still get the better of him repeatedly. But those are only commotions on the surface; deep down in his heart there flows a perpetual current of compassion. In fact, he, like his kin in the gallery of Hamsun characters, often hides his sympathy under a rough exterior. Munken Vendt receives every manifestation of compassion with his own lot as the gravest insult, is it then so strange that he suppresses his own tenderness to spare others humiliation? And what is true of him applies with undiminished force to the author.—That his ethical and philosophical views bear the impress of Friedrich Nietzsche, is evident enough.

Aside from Munken Vendt, there are more than half a dozen characters depicted in great detail. Iselin, Didrik, the sordid, tyrannical, malicious, and unscrupulous overlord of the countryside, Svend Herlufsen, the cynic, who proclaims views of women savoring very strongly of *Also sprach Zarathustra*, young Dundas, a spineless braggart and roisterer, Dyre, the shrewd, miserly,

⁴⁵ *Verker*, VII, *Munken Vendt*, p. 172.

brutish peasant, who might have realized his ambition of buying out Didrik some day if he had not come to an untimely death, and his son Elias, a petty thief and sanctimonious hypocrite before his conversion into a religious zealot, are of chief importance.

Iselin has in common with Teresita of *Livets Spil* that she fascinates all men of her own class with whom she comes in contact, but she is by no means an enigmatic character. Her affection belongs to Munken Vendt and never falters. Finding her love rejected, she takes vengeance, but she several times rescues Munken Vendt when danger threatens him from others. His admiration for her, coupled with his love for Blis, the simple child of nature, forms a parallel to similar situations in the case of Nagel, Glahn, and others.

Of equal importance with the portrayal of these characters is the general picture of life in *Nordland* as it was about the close of the eighteenth century, the time in which the drama has its setting. This remoteness in both place and time makes the unusual action more probable, though not always convincing. The superstitions and beliefs of the common people, their way of thinking, their impotent submission to the overbearing, tyrannical conduct of their superiors, the arbitrariness, pride and arrogance of the upper class, the maladministration of justice then prevailing, all these features are presented in concrete and realistic fashion. The poor for the most part hardly feel themselves wronged by the abuse inflicted upon them. A good illustration is the case of Blis. Didrik has seduced her, and she expects a child. Munken Vendt, who is ignorant of the situation, proposes to marry her and she, of course, readily consents, but proceeds forthwith to tell that they had better hurry for her child is to be born in wedlock. While she places high value on the mere form, it is not at all her intention to conceal the truth, she cannot even conceive of a reason for doing so and is devoid of any sense of disgrace. When Munken Vendt withdraws his proposal, she is surprised that he, himself born illegitimate, should show himself sensitive in regard to the matter. And many years later, when the two meet again, she boasts of the fact that her daughter Alexa is of better extraction than the rest of her children that were born to her in marriage. If we are to appraise her mode of thought correctly, it must be borne in mind that affection played no part in her relations with Didrik.

It is a picture of ignorance, degradation, vice, and injustice which the author unrolls before our eyes, and Munken Vendt gains by contrast with his surroundings in spite of his many faults and shortcomings, for Hamsun has by no means idealized his hero. Munken Vendt's love of liberty, yearning for justice and honesty, and, last but not least, his proud defiance of all powers in heaven and on earth, are the most important features of this final outbreak of Hamsun's own rebellious spirit. In Munken Vendt we have the last instance of this type of central figure in the works of the author. He and those that went before him are strong-willed, sensitive, upright individuals who cannot adjust themselves to social conditions, for whom social intercourse means intense sufferings, and who purchase relative independence by isolation. They are all impractical, are distrustful of the conventional forms, which they fail to recognize as what they really are: the medium for lessening friction in frequent, close contact with a multitude of people. In spite of all outward acerbity, these strange individuals do not become actually embittered at heart, for they are not possessed by the ambition to succeed. They prefer obscurity to name and fame, from which certain fetters are inseparable, though they be of gold. These men are all governed by powerful impulses, because they are hyper-sensitive to all stimuli, and for this reason the permanent part in their personalities, i.e., character, is often obscured and therefore seems to be wanting. Some are drawn to their fellow men, but they are unable to make the concessions necessary for close association. In the case of a clash of ideas, they declare their own opinions and convictions to be the only true ones. They judge "after the subjective logic of their temperaments," as Nagel puts it, and they have a deep contempt for public opinion, the opinion of the masses, in our democratic day and age a suicidal tendency. So they naturally must perish. In love, it is not the winning of the beloved—they do not win her, not one of them—but the longing in itself and the memories of it which constitute the richest joy. This fact is the more striking if we consider Hamsun's contention that love is never far removed from its physical basis. We know many an author who exalts love, but sees to it that the senses find ample gratification. Hamsun puts no emphasis upon this feature. Aside from their longings and memories, nature is a potent source of joy and blissful peace for this type of Hamsun's figures, and Munken Vendt shares this

trait with the rest. They are all individualists, of the author's own flesh and blood, they have many traits in common and yet such a large element of independent personality that one does not regard them as repetitions. The explanation must be sought in the wide range, the intensity, and originality of Hamsun's inner life and his power of expression.

VIII

In 1903, there appeared *I Æventyrland* (In Fairyland), the fruit of a journey through Russia for which Hamsun had been awarded a stipend by the state. This work is subjective like virtually all of Hamsun's productions, but it makes interesting reading because of the author's great skill in description. The personal element, ever present, lends it additional charm. The Russian people with their calm endurance, child-like simplicity, and impulsiveness appealed to him greatly. With their large store of vitality, they seem to him destined to become the dominating race at some future day. A passage referring to an experience in Moscow is significant.

"I am happy that I have hit upon this spot; several good old people sit a short distance away, eating and chatting, and their faces are not ugly and wasted as those of old people as a rule are, but, on the contrary, open and strong, and they all have an abundance of hair. Slavic people! I think, as I look at them. The people of the future. Destined to succeed as masters of the world the Germanic race! Among such a people a literature like the Russian can spring forth, boundless, scaling the very heavens in eight mighty, fiery currents from their eight gigantic authors. We others will have enough to do for a long time trying to comprehend it and approach it. But the kind of literature to which the theaters treat the people, they prefer to have other authors look after."⁴⁶

Recent events make it appear that the Russian people are further away than ever from the goal destined for them in the opinion of Hamsun. But the fact remains that they are in possession of great resources and a mighty store of energy and vitality, and they may yet make come true Hamsun's prophecy at some far distant day.

⁴⁶ *Verker*, IV, *I Æventyrland*, p. 12.

Russian literature, or rather, some of its greatest figures, are characterized more fully later on. Turgenjev was a representative of western European civilization, from which he expected salvation for his people. He was honest in his convictions, more a man of the heart than of the intellect, but nevertheless more French than Russian, and he followed the way on which all mediocrity traveled in his day.

Dostojevsky, on the other hand, is for Hamsun the true exponent of the Russian spirit. He calls him a fanatic, a madman, and a genius in the same breath. Dostojevsky's achievements, which surpass those of all others, resulted from the very fact that he, from the start, bore within himself the conviction that he was a genius. His power of psychic analysis and penetration amounts to divination.

In regard to Tolstoy, Hamsun's opinion seems still to be the same as that set forth in *Mysterier*. Tolstoy's position in later life does not appeal to Hamsun as quite genuine. He assumes that Tolstoy turned to religion to give a new content to his life when his physical powers declined. At first, there was more or less pose in this, just as in the case of Ibsen's attitude, later on, this pose became for both a necessity, borne up by conviction. But both would have been greater if they had taken themselves less seriously. They, moreover, impaired their positions by their philosophical attempts. Faultfinding and pondering are not philosophical thinking. Tolstoy and Ibsen were ponderers. The philosophic views of the former, Hamsun designates as a mixture of self-evident truths and strange, imperfect notions. He possessed the organs necessary for thinking, but his brain was empty. English philosophy, with its utilitarianism and hedonistic aims, was largely responsible for the aberrations of Ibsen, Tolstoy, and others. The evolutionary theory, with its doctrines of the influence of heredity and environment, exerted a most powerful influence upon literature; scientific questions were aired in drama and novel, literature served to popularize science, and so the authors in question were hailed as philosophers, at first much to their own surprise, until they diligently sought to play the rôle forced upon them. The result was a pose. In the end, Hamsun segregates Tolstoy from the rest and pronounces him an old prophet whose equal we cannot find in our time.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ cf. *Verker*, IV, I *Æventyrland*, pp. 117 ff.

It is a well known fact that Hamsun's sympathy for the Russian people is not at all one-sided. Practically all his works have been translated into Russian, and they have nowhere been accorded as enthusiastic a reception as in Russia.

In the Caucasus and on the shores of the Black Sea, Hamsun came in contact with Mohammedans. They appealed to him almost as strongly as the Russian people, especially by their stoicism. Their very indolence and indifference, really resulting from their fatalistic conception of life, the simplicity of their mode of existence, and the paucity of their wants emancipate them in his opinion from the most irksome burdens of human life. Having observed an old moslem lying in a cool night on the bare floor with no other pillow than his arm, in a room with doors and windows gone, he muses:

"That is the way they sleep, these splendid old men whom we now and then run across in daytime. It surely does not seem comfortable for them, but they put up with it and live to old age in such conditions. And if they have lived their lives in such a manner that they may paint green turbans on the head-boards of their graves—a privilege enjoyed only by those who have made three pilgrimages to Mecca—then nothing, absolutely nothing is lacking to the happiness of their existence, then Allah has been good to them. And they do not enjoy human rights and suffrage, and they don't carry the *Vorwärts* in their pockets. Poor Orient, we Prussians and Americans must, indeed, pity you!"⁴⁸

The virtual absence of western civilization in the lives of the overwhelming majority of the Russian people, is plainly enough the one feature which appeals most to Knut Hamsun. The adoption of European, or worse still, American ways and methods spells demoralization for them.

Dronning Tamara (Queen Tamara), 1903, is, so to speak, a by-product of the Russian journey.⁴⁹ It is a prose play, with the Queen's castle near Ani in Georgia for its setting, the time is the beginning of the thirteenth century. The very indistinct historical background is furnished by the strife of the Christian people of Georgia with the neighboring Mohammedan tribes. The theme is that of erring love. Tamara, the ruling queen, has become cold

⁴⁸ *Verker*, IV, I *Æventyrland*, p. 163.

⁴⁹ The play came out before the account of his travels; both appeared in the same year.

towards her husband, Prince Giorgi, who is now for her but the first among her officers. Her heart has been slumbering, but it is suddenly aroused upon meeting a young khan whom Giorgi has made a prisoner. Both are immediately infatuated with each other, the khan to such an extent that he forgets his creed and his duty towards his people. He is set free by Fatimat, a Mohammedan maiden of high birth, living at the Queen's court as captive, without, however, suffering any restraint of her personal liberty. Drawn by his passion for Tamara, he returns, only to meet death at the hands of Giorgi's warriors.

Giorgi has made an unsuccessful attempt to ally himself with the enemies of the Queen, to enable him to stand before her as conqueror, and to restore, thereupon, her powers to her again. He has chosen this desperate method to show himself the master and regain the love of Tamara. When all seems lost, he surrenders himself to the tribe of the slain khan to free his son who has fallen into the hands of the enemy. The body of the khan is in the possession of the Queen, and at the counsel of her spiritual adviser, a stern zealot, she refuses, much against her own inclination, to surrender it, unless the khan's people promise to embrace Christianity. They refuse to do this and, persuaded by Giorgi and led by him, make themselves masters of the castle by force of arms. And Giorgi has calculated correctly. His daring and bravery restore to him the affection of his queen; he is for her again the hero whom she loved in the days of her youth. The Mohammedans acknowledge the sovereignty of Queen Tamara, and all ends well.

There is an abundance of rapid action; as a matter of fact, it is almost too rapid, for all the events touched upon above occur in two days and one night. It would have been a small task to change this feature, but Hamsun evidently saw no need of it. For the presentation of a play it matters little whether a certain lapse of time is suggested or not, the spectators make for themselves the necessary allowance. The critical reader, on the other hand, may find the development too precipitous. In this particular play there is nothing impossible in the quick succession of momentous happenings, and from the stage point of view, one may regard the concentration here practiced as a merit.

Dronning Tamara should be very effective on the stage, for it contains many elements of spectacular nature. Only the scene of the conquest of the castle, where we must infer the all important

feats of bravery performed by Giorgi from the remarks and exclamations of a few onlookers, is somewhat weak. The three acts require but one setting. Very explicit directions are given for it, and the garb of the different individuals is minutely described. If staged accordingly, the play would present a strange and gorgeous spectacle. In spite of the exotic character of the theme and the romantic action, the drama aims to be realistic, as far as this is possible in the case of a portrayal of events so far removed in place and time.

Hamsun does not take sides in the controversy between Christianity and Mohammedanism. But when Tamara, at the close, praises Fatimat for her conduct, the latter holds: "Well—a Mohammedan should, indeed, be a little better than a Christian," and the Queen replies: "I shall try to become as good as you are, Fatimat."

The year 1903 witnessed, aside from the two works dealt with above, the appearance of thirteen short stories and sketches under the collective title *Kratskog* (Copsewood). Several deal with erotic themes. *Livets Røst* (The Call of Life), is characteristic for certain views of Hamsun. A young woman who has been married to a man considerably her senior goes out upon the street the day after the death of her husband and finds herself a lover. She takes him along to her house where they spend the night together. When the young man, who knows nothing about the woman, leaves in the morning, he discovers in another room of the apartment a corpse in its coffin. Later he learns through the newspaper that it was the body of the woman's husband.

"I remain sitting there a while and think over the matter. A man has married a woman who is thirty years younger than he, he is stricken by a lingering illness, one nice day he dies.

"And the young widow takes a deep breath."

Such is the conclusion of the story, which is told in the first person.

Knut Hamsun holds that the sexual instinct is the ruling passion of mankind, of all things created, for that matter, and the cause of our woes. The first stanza of a poem entitled *Det Suk gjennem Skapningen* (The Sigh of Creation), in which the question is debated, reads:

This sigh of creation which Saint Paul has heard,⁶⁰
Our sins, are they, indeed, of it the cause?

⁶⁰ The reference is to *Romans*, VIII, 22.

I risk to most humbly and meekly suggest
That sex is the cause of this sigh of Saint Paul,
And hold, until better proof is produced,
My view of the matter correct.

As his latest work testifies, Hamsun has not been presented with any acceptable proof to the contrary.

The most important stories of the collection are *Far og Søn* (Father and Son), *Smaabyliv* (Life in a Small Town), and *Zachæus*. The scene of the latter is somewhere on the prairies of the Middle West. It gives a good picture of the life of a harvest gang on one of the big, isolated farms. The outstanding feature is the disregard for law. One of the hands, Zachæus by name, has made the cook of the gang his enemy. Zachæus one day loses one of his fingers as the horses on the mower start up unexpectedly. He is laid up in the bunk-house and he comes thus in frequent contact with the cook, and friction increases between them. His severed finger Zachæus preserves religiously in a small bottle. The cook gets hold of it and to avenge himself for the theft of an old newspaper—to be sure, it is the only reading matter on the whole place—he serves the finger to Zachæus in his food. A few days later, Zachæus shoots the cook in cold blood and buries him in the field. When he comes back to the bunk house, he, in a casual manner, informs the others of his deed. The news produces hardly a ripple. Another man is appointed cook by the foreman, and Zachæus keeps on working with the rest until the harvest is completed and they all scatter. No one thinks of interfering with the departure of Zachæus or even of reporting his deed to the authorities. The author does not add one word of comment to his account. It must be borne in mind that the events here spoken of are supposed to have happened more than a generation ago.

Paa Prærien (On the Prairie) relates some personal experiences of Knut Hamsun on the harvest fields of the Middle West. There is no plot or point to this sketch and no comment. The most striking feature is the general debauch which ensues when, after being paid off, the gang reaches the town and the saloon.

Rædsel (Terror) also brings reminiscences from Hamsun's sojourn in the United States. It is less interesting than the preceding sketch, since it is confined to very simple, personal experiences of the author. In the eighties, Hamsun worked for a time in the

little town of Madelia, Wis., where he ran a lumber yard while the owner and his wife were making a visit in the East.

One day, he is detained so long by customers that it is too late to put the proceeds of the day's sales, about eight hundred dollars, in the bank. During the night, an attempt is made by several men to break into the house, and Hamsun confesses that at first he was almost scared to death, though he ultimately drove off the intruders.

Two years later, there appeared in the collection *Stridende Liv* (The Struggle of Life) two more stories based on American experiences of Hamsun. The longer one, *Vagabonds Dager* (Vagabond Days), is but a variation of the theme dealt with in *Zachæus* and *Paa Prærien*. The large amount of toil exacted from the men is particularly stressed. Three of them, Hamsun among their number, leave the camp secretly. They strike out for the nearest railroad, across the open prairie, without a compass. Half perished they come to a farm house where they obtain some food. Having reached a small country town, Hamsun's companion—only one of the men is still with him—suggests that they rob the bank. He himself does the work while Hamsun stands guard. But Jess declares on his return from the expedition that he has not found a cent—only to take the next train out with his haul, leaving Hamsun behind without a cent in his pocket.

The latter drifts back to the farm where they had been given food, lured by the hope of winning the farmer's daughter. He succeeds in ingratiating himself with the old folks, but the girl prefers Fred, a German tramp, and finally elopes with him. The rivalry between the two men is dealt with at length. Love's labor lost, Hamsun pushes on farther west.

Kvindeseir (The Woman's Victory) is a brief narrative of an incident supposedly from Hamsun's conductor days in Chicago. The story is extraordinary enough.

A young man has lost the affections of his pretty spouse and conceives the idea of staging an attempt at suicide before the eyes of his wife to convince her of the depth of his love. On the corner of Monroe Street he will descend into the trap in the center of the track, giving access to the cable. To make sure that he will not be run over as he stands there, his head above the ground and directly in the path of the clutches that grip the cable, he arranges things with both the motorman and the conductor beforehand,

giving each one ten dollars. They are even to simulate a fight when they have stopped the train of cars and come to remove him from the trap. His wife will be on the first car, see the whole thing, and experience a change of heart. The stranger is so circumspect that he designates the very drug store to which his wife is to be taken if she should faint.

All develops according to the program. The pretty and stylishly attired young woman boards the car and takes the front seat. She occupies it alone. Soon she engages the motorman in conversation. The corner of Monroe Street comes in sight, and there stands a man in the trap, his head above the ground. The conductor frantically signals to stop, but in vain. The cars run on at full speed, and the man in the trap is neatly decapitated. When the conductor (i.e., Hamsun) slams on the brakes, it is too late. The young woman cries out: "Horrible, horrible!"—but utterly fails to faint. Pat, the motorman, leaves his post after borrowing the conductor's knife to cut off his brass buttons.

All this happens the day before Christmas. One evening between Christmas and New Year, when the conductor is off duty, he happens upon Pat, who is in brand new clothes and minus his mustache—on board a westbound train ready to pull out.

"Farewell," said Pat. "By the way, how much did you get of the man we ran over?"

"Ten dollars.

"The same as I got. Well, he really paid well enough. But the woman paid better.

"The woman?"

"The young woman, yes. I made a little deal with her. And a couple of thousands did not seem too much to her, for she wanted to get rid of her husband. It is her money with which I now can make a start in life."

The End.

Not a word of comment, nor any suggestion that the occurrence is typical for American life. The reader must draw his own conclusions; the same applies to the other productions pertaining to conditions in the United States.

In all, there are but five short stories and sketches that come under this head, unless we wish to include the sketch *Paa Ban-berne* (Off the Newfoundland Banks), contained in the collection

Siesta. But the locality in question does not come under the jurisdiction of the United States, or even Canada, it would seem, and the description here given portrays life on board a fishing vessel under the Russian flag.

Hamsun's residence in the United States, accordingly, has not resulted in any important literary production that can be traced to America. Certain types and conditions depicted in *Ny Jord* are well nigh universal, and the claim that they are inconceivable without the American experiences of the author seems exaggerated.

In the stories and sketches just discussed the author has been in a certain manner objective and he has abstained from criticism or comment, but his attitude towards the United States is not sympathetic. One feature he emphasizes, the contempt of the native American for all people of foreign birth. Scattered observations in the works of Hamsun show his distaste for the mad pace of American life and for our real or supposed materialism.

Three of the stories in *Stridende Liv* pertain to Norwegian conditions. They are well constructed and make good reading. A brief sketch referring to the ways of animals and a continuation of *I Æventyrland*, entitled *Under Halvmaanen* (Under the Crescent), are also included in the collection. The latter describes impressions of Hamsun on his visit to the shores of the Bosphorus. We are already familiar with his general attitude towards the Moslem world and need not enter here into further details. Interesting is a suggestion as to the fate which may possibly befall the Russian Empire: namely, disintegration. But has Hamsun not proclaimed the Slavic people as the race destined to succeed their Germanic neighbors in the rule of the world? Yes, indeed, and the breaking-up of their empire, not even bolshevism and sovietism; can permanently change the destiny of the Slavic people, he presumably would reply.

IX

Hamsun has published but a small number of poems. They appeared under the significant title *Det vilde Kor* (The Wild Chorus), 1904. Naturally, his poems are even more subjective than his works of fiction and consequently afford us more direct insight into his views of life.

There are a few gentle love poems and a larger number seething with passion. One of the latter kind, *Alraunen* (The Mandrake), seems to have been suggested by the superstitions which the people

of various climes associate with this plant. The first part of the poem is placed at the beginning of the drama *Dronning Tamara*, the theme itself is well known in all parts of Europe. Love is here represented as an irresistible force, a strange, mysterious magic, against which man is entirely defenceless. But Hamsun has never been able to see it in any other light. A cycle of ten, entitled *Feberdikte* (Fever Poems) suggests an experience similar to that of Johannes in *Victoria*. Upon short bliss there follows separation for conventional reasons. Life seems to have lost all its meaning; death with its promise of ultimate peace is the longed-for goal. Finally the poet rises above his grief, but a much changed man.

Nu er det gaat saa mangen Dag, og Dagene de iler.
 Min Sjæl er frisk og kold og haard,
 en Høst har stormet i dens Vaar.
 Jeg klager ikke mer, jeg nikker taus til alt og smiler.

Jeg vandrer in i Skogene, en Hersker uten Rike,
 en bøiet Mand, en hævet Aand,
 en falden Fot, en knyttet Haand,
 og hilser mig med Kaarden som min Overvindere Like.*

We have here, on the one hand, this spirit of defiance which admits of no defeat, on the other hand, the consolation found in close communion with nature which are so characteristic of Hamsun. This love of nature has inspired a number of the best poems in the entire collection. The seasons of the year, the woods, in one instance the sea, little scenes from out-of-door life furnish the themes. The forests Hamsun loves above all. Finding himself one night on the way to the city, he stops and reflects, and decides to go back to his beloved woods.

Saa vender jeg om til Skogens Fred
 i Midnatters sene Tide.
 Jeg vet hvor det dufter en Hægg et Sted,
 der lægger jeg Hodet i Lyngen ned
 og sover i Skogen vide.†

*So many a day has now gone by and how the days do hurry. / My soul is fresh, and cold, and hard, / Grim fall has swept the spring of it. / No longer I complain, but smiling nod to all in silence.

I wander in the woods alone, a ruler without kingdom, / A bowed down man, a lifted soul, / A fallen foot, a tight-clenched hand, / And with my sword salute myself as equal of my victor.

†The peaceful woods then I seek again / At midnight's belated hour. / I know where there blossoms a cherry wild, / There shall I lay on the heather my head / And sleep in the forest's temple.

The poem *Nordland* gives with a few bold and highly effective strokes a picture of the grandeur of the natural scenery, the bounty of the soil, the life of the people, and the poet's hopes for the development of these remote regions, closing with a glorification of *Nordland* and her sons. A commission which recently visited this most sparsely settled region reported very favorably in regard to the possibilities existing there, considerable agricultural expansion being among them. Hamsun wrote half a generation ago:

Nordland—Nordland, vor Fremtids Hjem,
Grojord til alle Sider,
Morgningens unge Land som vil frem,—
Landet skal frem!
Skjærme og signe det nu og i alle Tider!*

The same spirit pervades his greatest novel, as we shall see further on.

Several of the poems have the simplicity of the folk song and are at the same time very musical. Some of these are from *Munken Vendt*, where they are put into the mouths of the simple folk. For mere tunefulness, the "Sailor's Song" surpasses them all, though "Tora's Song" rivals it closely and is much finer in sentiment. *Sorosi Piker* (Sorosi Girls) and *Kvanneletherskerners Sang* (Song of the Flower Seekers, *kvanne* = Angelica) should be mentioned here also; *Enerbusken* (The Juniper Bush) strongly appeals by its child-like simplicity. "Svend Herlufsen's Sayings," also incorporated in *Munken Vendt*, are verses in a semi-philosophical vein and reflect very strongly the influence of Friedrich Nietzsche, especially in the estimate placed upon women. This latter corresponds only in a general way to Hamsun's own views in the matter. Though many of his female characters are coquettish, selfish, sensual, unscrupulous, in short, inferior, there are some of a nobler mold to be found in his works. The woman for whom love is the supreme law he ranks highest. The modern woman he abhors. In his *Himmelbrev til Byron* (Letter to Byron in the Great Beyond), he has poured forth his detestation of this type. Referring to Byron's mythical love, he writes:

Det skrider en Engel
med sænkede Vinger

*Nordland—Nordland, our future home, / Fertile lands all about us, / Morning's strong, young land bent onward,— / Onward it shall! / Now and for ever shield it and give it thy blessing.

som hele din Elskovs
 Tungsindighet ser.
 Til Piken fra Malory,
 Piken fra Malory
 gaar dine Tanker
 og er det du ber.
 O Piken fra Malory,
 Lille-Bells Moder,
 hører ei mer.
 Hvad hun gjorde er gjort:
 hun var kold, hun gik bort.
 Saa taug hun for Verden og lukket sig inde.
 Kom, nu skal du høre en Nutids Kvinde!

Hun skjuler sig ei som din Malory-Pike
 og tier ei bly om sin egen Skam,
 hun heller bekjender med Brask og Bram
 og gjør sig berømt over Land og Rike.
 Hun stiller sig offentlig ut som en Gold,
 den Rene, den Kolde som ingen kan klandre
 hun tværtimot kneiser og haaner de andre
 som endnu har hele sit Kjøn i Behold.
 Hun skriver og taler, hun flammer og gløder:
 her ser I en ægte og tidsmæssig Mø;
 jeg skjøtter Budgetter for Land og for Sjø,
 I andre forelsker Jær, giftes og føder—
 Jærs Type forsvinder, om litt vil den dø!
 I Kjævl og Debatter ser ingen Maken,
 hun kjæler sig øm som en elskovsfuld Kat
 ved Spørsmal om Landets og Byens Skat,
 ved sportslige Stævner og Stemmeretssaken—
 her griper hun fyrig og kvindelig fat.
 Men altid saa tar hun sin haardeste Tørn
 i Saker om Ægteskap, Elskov og Børn,
 som har hun Alverdens Erfaring paa Baken.
 Slik gaar hun da om gjennom Landet og Byen
 og holder sit Liv for en gylden Reform.
 Og ingen tør mene at hun er abnorm;
 ti stikker hun freidig sin Næse mot Skyen
 og spotter hver Storm.

Men Sangen—Sangen den drager av Lande
 og Hylet det høres i Gate og Dal:
 Arbeiderbevægelse, Damp, Kapital,
 ja Hyl over alle hvilende Vande.
 Men Sangen drager av Lande.*

*There sojourns an angel / With low-drooping pinions / Beholding thy passion's / Melancholy grief. / To thy sweetheart from Malory, / The girl from Malory / All thy thoughts wander, / To her dost thou pray. / Oh, the girl from

As we see from the last stanza—it is not the final stanza of the poem—modern civilization in general seems to Hamsun a change for the worse. He is evidently not convinced that a better world will result from the intense strife now going on in all the countries of western civilization, and it is important in this connection that he does not consider Christianity a force which could uplift mankind. Since fortitude and pride are for him cardinal virtues, and strife and conflict essential for the ultimate victory of the highest type, the Christian teachings of humility and peace seem to him but manifestations of degeneracy. Even if evil should triumph, it would be preferable to mediocrity preserved by faint-hearted compromise, especially since every victory is only temporary. While altogether out of patience with the present state of development, Hamsun sincerely believes that at some future day those forces will once more gain the ascendancy which he regards as noble, uplifting, and beneficent to human kind.

In the poem *Betragtning* (Speculations), he brands as arrogance the claim of intolerant orthodoxy that Christianity is the only road leading to salvation. He draws a parallel between Mohammedanism, with its similar attitude towards all infidels, and Christianity and ironically suggests that there are half a dozen to the one and six to the other.

Malory, / Little Bell's mother, / Hears thee no more. / What she did, it is done: / She was cold and she left. / Was silent to the world and hid herself from it. / Come, now thou shalt hear a present-day woman.

She never hides herself like thy Malory girl sweet. / No modest silence about her disgrace, / She rather confesses with mighty ado / And makes herself famous the wide world over. / She poses in public as one being steril, / As the pure and the cold, whom no one can censure, / Nay, verily struts, and jeers at the others / Who yet are possessing the merit of sex. / She writes and makes speeches, she blazes with fervor: / Behold a genuine, present-day maid; / She wrestles with budgets for land and for sea, / You others to love yet succumb, marry, bear children— / Your type is fast waning, and soon will die out! / In strife and debating you find not her equal, / She gently fondles like a dear, loving cat / All questions of taxes in city and state, / And sport-people's meetings, the problem of suffrage— / Takes hold here in fiery and womanly way. / But ever she enters most boldly the lists / In questions of marriage, and children, and love, / As though she possessed a whole world of experience. / She strides thus about in each city and country, / Regarding her life as a glorious reform. / And no one dares whisper that she is abnormal; / She therefore sticks dauntless her nose towards heaven, / Deriding each storm.

But song and the muses do flee the countries / And howling resounds now in street and in dale: / The rights of the laborer, capital, steam, / A howl over all the peaceful, wide waters. / But song does now flee from our lands.

His own creed amounts to some form of pantheism. Man is the product of nature. To work for his subsistence and comfort and to propagate are the purposes of existence. Life, if it is to be worth living, is for Hamsun health, vigor, and action. Obedience to the natural instincts, especially those of sex, deserves not condemnation but praise. It is, however, to be noted that he denounces all forms of wanton debauch and perverse instincts. At times, Hamsun really seems to exult in the fact that sin far outstrips virtue; very likely he sees in the sinner stronger vital forces manifested than in the saint. He has no patience with those who proclaim life still a blessing after the faculties for even passive participation have been lost. Later on we find in his works a note of regret over the gradual decline of the exuberant vitality of his youth and a forced resignation, but no surrender. We must also bear in mind that Hamsun welcomes all experiences, no matter whether they come under the head of pleasure or pain, and incapacity for life consists for him in the last analysis in the deterioration of the intellect, in the inability of the mind to grasp and record experiences.

There is no sure indication that Hamsun believes in the immortality of the human soul, though some of his utterances certainly imply it. It would probably be difficult for him to conceive of the annihilation of such spirits as that of Byron, for instance. In spite of his pantheistic bent, there seems to exist for Hamsun a supreme being, apart from nature, personal and independent, which is ruling the universe arbitrarily and despotically. As we already have seen, he alternately defies and venerates this being and addresses to it his prayers and imprecations. But gratitude for the boon of life and calm acceptance of the stern laws of existence are, after all, the dominant and abiding elements.

Death holds no terror for him. It is perhaps not the transition to a higher, spiritual form of life; it may only mean that in the cycle of birth and death, fixed by the laws of nature, our bodies are once more dissolved into the elements from which they are built up, and which in turn engender and sustain other, possibly new and higher forms of life. But whatever may be back of death, it is certainly a benevolent provision of the forces which govern the existence of the universe.

Like *Munken Vendt*, Hamsun wishes 'to die in his boots,' preferably in his beloved woods and alone. The poem *Gravsted*

(My Grave) reveals so well the fundamental principle of Hamsun's philosophy that we needs must quote it in its entirety.

Gravsted*

Nei Herregud lat mig ikke forgaa
i en Seng med Tæpper og Lakener paa
og med vaate Næser tilhuse.
Lat mig rammes en Dag uten Forudbesked
og falde omkuld i Skogen et Sted
hvor ingen vil komme og snuse.

Jeg kjender vel Skogen, jeg er dens Søn,
den vil ikke nægte min ringe Bøn
at dø paa dens Tyttebærsmue.
Saa gir jeg igjen uten Taler og Styr
mit store Kadaver til alle dens Dyr,
til Kraake, Rotte og Flue.

Jojo jeg skal holde en Fest naar jeg dør,
en Fest som skal skaffe de Næb og Klør
og Tænder endel at bestille.
Men Ekornen lægger sit Hode paaskraa
og ser fra sin Kvist med de Øine smaa
som Menneskeøine, den Lille.

Saa blir det et rikelig Maal til hver,
og endda saa sitter den mætte Hær

*Oh Lord, I pray thee do not let me die / In a bed with blankets and sheets
piled upon / And with dripping noses about me. / Nay, smite me some day without
warning presentiment, / That headlong I fall in the forest some place / Where
no one will come around nosing.

I well know the forest, I am its son, / It will not deny my humble request /
To die on its cowberry bog. / Thus will I give back without word of complaint /
My mighty cadaver to its creatures all, / To the crows, the rats, and the flies.

Indeed I shall spread them a feast when I die, / A feast which shall give all
these beaks and claws / And teeth a huge task to engage in. / But the squirrel
does tilt its small head aslant / And looks from its branch with eyes as alert / As
human eyes are, the little chap.

An ample repast for each it will be, / But the satisfied host does linger still /
And picks clean the sumptuous board. / An eagle at last strips bare my bones, / He
stays on the spot till all is gone, / When in he draws his sharp talons.

And late in the eve and all night long, / There rises in honor of the dead a
song / As fine as of any sexton. / For in person the high born owl herself / Will
shriek like the very deuce.

And all the rest of my mortal remains / Is hidden at dawn in a grave of leaves /
When ended night's merry ado. / Farewell, my good friends! / I have treated you
well! / —But all these leaves, whence have they all come? / The wind simply
swept them together.

og piller den gode Taffel.
 Da ribber tilslut en Ørn mit Skelet,
 han blir paa Stedet til alt er ætt,
 saa trækker han ind sin Gaffel.

Og sent paa Kvælden og Natten lang
 det lyder til Ære for Liket en Sang
 saa skjøn som av nogen Klokke.
 Da faar jeg min siste Ovation,
 for Uglen i egen høie Person
 vil tute som bare Pokker.

Og Resten av hele mit jordiske Støv
 er dækket ved Gry i en Grav av Løv
 naar sluttet er Nattens Gammen.
 Farvel, mine Venner! Jeg møttet Jær bra!
 —Men all dette Løv hvor kommer det fra?
 Jo Vinden har feiet det sammen.

Even in death he wants to enjoy this bliss of solitude in the forest to which he owes some of his deepest and purest joys and noblest emotions.

In his attitude towards organized society, Hamsun is an aristocrat and unyielding individualist. He is sympathetic, even compassionate towards his fellow-men, but looks with disdain upon the masses. Superior strength and ability are to him the only just title to a larger share in life. But this ability must be coupled with greatness, magnanimity, and personal courage, in short, it must be of a heroic and noble nature. Social and political institutions do not promote this sort of superiority; they often tend to defeat it and further injustice. Personally, Hamsun strives to rise in lofty contempt over the petty trials and tribulations, and general sordidness of existence, no matter what their cause. While the influence of Nietzsche has surely had its share in shaping his views, it is highly probable that he would have arrived at similar conclusions without it.

Mention has already been made of the two poems to Björnson entitled *Björnson paa hans 70 Aars Fødselsdag* (Björnson on his Seventieth Birthday) and *Bjørnsøns Død* (Björnson's Death). Norwegian critics praise them highly, probably because of the appeal to their national feelings which these poems make. Björnson appealed to Hamsun through the romantic vein in a number of his works, but most of all through his mighty energy, his untiring

devotion to his cause, and the sincerity and strength of his convictions.

In his *Himmelbrev til Byron* (Letter to Byron in the Great Beyond), Hamsun gives fervent expression to his admiration for the great English poet who in spite of important external differences has many traits in common with him, and he deeply laments that the poetic and heroic are vanishing from life in our day and age. "When will you return, you great heretic?" he inquires mournfully.

Det hørtes en Tone fra dine Øer
om Piker og Helter og Livets Musik
og Morilden i det forelskede Blik—
den lyder ei mere om Nutidens Møer.
Ti Sangen drager av Lande.*

Byron, like Hamsun, rebelled at society, scoffed at its shams, conventions, and morals, extolled passion and the heroic in man. He spent his life roaming from place to place, dissatisfied, chafing under the restraint put upon him by society, teeming with energy and always in action, and above all a fearless iconoclast. Small wonder that Hamsun admires such a kindred genius.

The same holds true of his tribute to Böcklin, in *Böcklins Død* (Böcklin's Death). One only needs to recall some of the strange fancies of Glahn in *Pan* to perceive the common bond between Hamsun and the great painter.

The romantic traits in Hamsun are very pronounced, but he is not a romanticist pure and simple. Certain elements which characterize the movement that took place in German literature about 1800, he lacks completely. We find in him no mysticism, no religious ecstasy, none of this blind enthusiasm for medieval art and the life of the Middle Ages in general, so prevalent in the works of the German romanticists. Cultural values do not rank highly with Hamsun, and his historical sense is poorly developed. Since he is anti-social, it is only logical that he depreciates culture which is only possible as the product of organized society. In this particular, he is inconsistent. At the very beginning of his career, he denounced the United States as a country hostile to culture, he deplores the vanishing of poetry and beauty from our lives, he

*There rang forth a song from out of your isles / Of maidens, and heroes, and the music of life / And fire of passion in eyes beaming with love— / The song no more rings for now-a-day maidens. / For poetry flees from our lands.

admires true culture wherever he meets it, and yet he is hostile to the agencies and institutions serving the cause of culture. Presumably, he would retort that the present generation all the world over mistakes material splendor, pompousness, ostentatious display, and superficial elegance for genuine culture, that social institutions do not foster the latter. His own experiences must have had a tendency to convince him that culture is the fruit of individual effort, and to make him underestimate the share which civilization has contributed to his development.

Unlike the German romanticists, Hamsun is free from the sensual debauches of the imagination and the penchant for the horrible and cruel, not infrequent with the former. While he regards the instinct of propagation as the Alpha and Omega of life, he has not tried to build upon it a semi-religious cult.—A comparison of Hamsun's life work with Gerhart Hauptmann's *Ketzer von Soana* (The Heretic of Soana) is here very instructive.—Hamsun's relation to nature is also different, more intimate, simple, and elemental. There is nothing of the weird and uncanny in nature for him, and he never uses it as a sort of theatrical decoration. The illusive twilight of which some of the German romanticists were fond, is absent as are also all characters and events which are purely the product of the imagination. For all that, Hamsun is too firmly rooted in reality, albeit that he never reproduces it in a truly objective manner. But after every flight of his fancy he returns to earth again, and his hold on actual life increases with advancing years.

X

A certain change is already manifest in *Sværmere*⁵¹ (Enthusiasts), 1904. The characteristic feature of the story lies in the fact that Rolandsen, who is regarded by those who love propriety

⁵¹ The translation of the title is entirely inadequate, a better one, however, virtually impossible. The main character, the telegraph operator Rolandsen, is a reckless sort of a fellow, fond of liquor, a little boastful and rowdyish, after him we might name the story "Roisterers." But the title is also aimed at the pastor of the locality, a rigorist and zealot, and looking at it from this angle, "Fanatics" would be more appropriate. There is no word in the English language which suggests so many delicate shades of meaning, dominating and blending variously on different occasions, as the Norwegian *sværmer*, the cognate of the German *Schwärmer*. An English translation of the work, under the title "Dreamers," has just appeared.

almost as a social outcast, comes out victorious in the end. He is shown to be at the bottom a clever, enterprising, and determined fellow. In his choice of means he is not over-scrupulous, and for his so-called reputation he does not care one iota. Rolandsen has invented a new process of making fish-glue, but lacks the money to have it patented and cannot obtain it. When a certain sum is stolen from Mack, the local merchant and most powerful man of the place—he is a brother of the Mack whom we met in *Pan* and shall encounter again—he offers a reward of four hundred dollars and promises immunity to the thief if he owns up to his deed. Rolandsen confesses that he committed the robbery, of which he has not the slightest knowledge, and receives the reward and immunity from legal prosecution, though he must shoulder public disgrace. He loses his position, but secures the coveted patent. Just at that time the true thief is discovered, and Mack now threatens to bring Rolandsen before the bar of justice. The latter points out to Mack that his confinement will not last for ever, and that he, after his release, will be in a position to ruin Mack, who among other things operates a glue factory. So he buries the hatchet and makes Rolandsen his partner. Into the bargain, he wins the unattainable: the heart and hand of Elise Mack, who formerly looked down upon the outcast with proud disdain, although it is evident that she takes a strong interest in him from the first, a fact which she will not acknowledge even to herself. Mack is as little a moralist as Rolandsen himself. In all his acts he is governed solely by expedience. It is a redeeming trait in him that he is generous when his affairs prosper, though Hamsun would say Mack needs nothing to redeem him.

The rowdy succeeds, while the zealous pastor utterly fails in his endeavors to reform his parish. It should be pointed out that the author has treated this representative of the clergy with great fairness, in spite of his adverse attitude towards the Christian church and its ministers.

Rolandsen is, at the start, outside the pale of society, like the typical hero of Hamsun up to this time, but he ultimately succeeds in winning an advantageous position. Nay, more, he even carries off the girl of his choice, a thing which never happened before, though the credit for the happy solution really belongs to Elise Mack. The development is similar in *Benoni* and its sequel, *Rosa*, both of which appeared in 1908. Like *Sværmere*, they have

their setting in *Nordland*, in point of time, we must place them a few years later.

The exact locality in *Benoni* and *Rosa* is Sirilund, a merchant's estate, the same as in *Pan*, and from various references we are enabled to fix the date. The novels depict life in *Nordland* in the early sixties of last century. To be sure, Munken Vendt is introduced here, though he really should be dead by this time, but this fact would hardly dawn upon the general reader, even if he were acquainted with the drama in question, and it is, moreover, of no importance. *Benoni* tells of the rise of an able and lucky young fellow through several streaks of good fortune and the assistance of Ferdinand Mack. In the first place, it is human kindness which prompts Mack to help Benoni on his feet again after he has taken a severe tumble, but he intends to and does profit very liberally by Benoni's success. If we make liberal allowance for some palpable exaggerations, we have in *Benoni* and the sequel a realistic and fairly objective picture, to be sure, seen through the eyes of Hamson, of a simple-minded, ignorant, but quick-witted, and able fellow, whose chief ambition it is to play a rôle among his former equals. Hitherto, Mack has held the weal and woe of the people in his hands and has been a sort of Providence for them. When Benoni comes into possession of considerable wealth, considerable at least for the time and locality here dealt with, he tries to vie with Mack, the born and bred gentleman and master of men, but succeeds only in making himself ridiculous in the opinion of the few who know better, and above all, in the eyes of the reader. Benoni, in his desire to show off, is, indeed, a mere child. Yet, he makes an impression on the common folk, because they are also but children; but they know very well to differentiate between him and Mack. And no matter how much Benoni brags and boasts, he knows deep down in his heart that Mack is his superior. Matters are not altered by the fact that he becomes Mack's partner, though he is financially by far the stronger of the two. Mack, of course, manages very soon to restore the equilibrium somewhat by transferring, through a few clever transactions, some of Benoni's money to his own credit.

Rosa, the principal woman in both novels, is, in a sense, prosaic enough a figure, sane, sensible, kind-hearted, gentle, healthy, and strong, with sound, but well governed instincts and emotions, and a little bit sentimental, as befit's a pastor's daughter. Nor is her

fate out of the ordinary. She has been engaged for fourteen years to Nikolai Arentsen, a childhood companion, the son of the sexton, who has been studying law, and incidentally has become a good-for-nothing, a peasant lad gone to the dogs through prolonged contact with city life. When Rosa at last can no longer conceal from herself that the whole matter is hopeless, she breaks off the engagement and, influenced by Mack, who is her godfather, promises to marry Benoni. But while the latter is away for months at the Lofoten Islands, Arentsen returns. He has finally passed the bar examinations and starts practicing law in his home parish. As he meets Rosa, her old affection for him revives. She is greatly irritated by Benoni's boorishness and lack of education, and it requires not many arguments on the part of Arentsen to convince her that Benoni is not a fit husband for her. She goes back on her promise to the latter and marries Arentsen. Economic disaster and domestic quarrels are the inevitable results. Mack looks on for a while, and when he sees there is no hope, he provides Arentsen with some money and he disappears. Benoni's affections have not changed, and he eagerly accepts Mack's offer to procure a divorce for Rosa if he will supply the necessary funds. And in the end she is glad to marry Benoni, in the mistaken belief, however, that Arentsen has died meanwhile. When she discovers that she has been deceived in the matter, she is greatly troubled, but quickly regains her peace of mind when Arentsen really removes himself, once for all, by committing suicide. Soon after Rosa has a child and is now serene and happy. It is significant for Hamsun's ideal of women that Rosa becomes the object of the deepest affections of a young student of twenty-two. The joys and sorrows of his hopeless longing are made a part of the narrative in *Rosa*. *Af Student Parelus' Papirer*, in fact, it is Parelus who tells the story. The unfortunate lover is not of the aggressive kind, and the rôle which he himself plays is unimportant. When, on one occasion, he loses his self-control, Rosa, in a sane, kind, motherly fashion, soon brings him back to his senses. Ultimately, he departs for the forests to heal his wounded heart.

The lawyer Arentsen is an interesting character. He is kind-hearted, but light-headed, lazy, and cynical. It is not a strong affection which leads him to take Rosa away from Benoni; she has become desirable for him once more chiefly because another, and, as he at first thinks, inferior man, is about to marry her. The

whole affair is to him something of a lark. When Rosa has returned to him, he forgets both to have the bans published and the very day set for their wedding. Arentsen is sufficiently honest and intelligent to ascribe to himself alone the blame for the failure of their marriage and of his very life. At the final meeting with Rosa, he exhibits an unnecessarily brutal cynicism, but, as the author suggests, only to impress Rosa with his utter worthlessness so that she may not suffer from self-reproaches and grief over his fate, of which she is entirely innocent. Here, as elsewhere, Hamsun shows an intuitive understanding and deep sympathy for those that suffer ship-wreck on life's journey.

The most important character in the two novels is really Ferdinand Mack. He is, first of all, always a gentleman, he never loses his calm bearing, never is impolite, no matter what the provocation may be. He is able, shrewd, criminally unscrupulous in his business dealings, but would never cheat a poor man out of a cent. On the contrary, he is ever ready to help where there is real need. He acts thus without ulterior motive, nor does he squander his money foolishly, the way Benoni does in his desire to equal, nay, surpass Mack in liberality. Though some of Mack's corrupt dealings are known, the people do not lose confidence in him, because the shillings of the poor are absolutely safe in his hands. His soul is both white and black. Most American readers would unhesitatingly declare that the shadows far outweigh the light, not chiefly because of his unscrupulousness in business matters, but because of his personal conduct. Mack is a libertine and debauchee of a type unknown to us. Not that similar or worse offenders are non-existent among us, but such men practice their vices in secrecy, the general public is ignorant of what is going on, while Mack's transgressions are known to every one in the community. It is no secret that he really is the father of half a dozen or so of the firstborn in his realm, but what of it? The maids in his house have to do his bidding, and when the time comes that they must leave, they can rely on it that he will find a husband for each one and give the newly established family a start. And if he does not relinquish all claims to the young wives, it must be borne, too. The men, to be sure, now and then grumble or attempt even to rebel, but to no avail; they are all in his employ, and if they want to make bones about the matter, he only needs to pay them off to get rid of them. The women, on the other hand,

are willing victims; their attitude is much the same as that of Blis in *Munken Vendt*. Now that Mack has gotten along in years, he has invented strange devices and procedures to serve his voluptuousness and sensuality. The people talk about it all and shake their heads. What can't be cured must be endured. They regard Mack's conduct in the same light as natural events over which man has no control. If we reflect on the social and political conditions of the country and the time, we are easily convinced that recourse to the law cannot be had, and no one is so rash as to take the law into his own hands. The sentiment of the people would, indeed, be strongly against such a hot-headed individual. It is Edvarda, Mack's own daughter, his only legitimate child, who finally attempts to put a stop to his escapades and adventures and, indeed, temporarily succeeds. She has some paraphernalia most essential to the celebration of his saturnalian orgies, a large, portable bath tub and an eider-down bed are chief among them, secretly removed and buried. Benoni, Mack's partner in business, is her co-conspirator and the executor of the plan, and at first he brags not a little about his exploit. Mack never says a word about the whole matter, he simply declares himself ill and keeps to his bed, and the affairs of the whole place are soon in so dismal a state that Benoni sees himself compelled secretly to restore to Mack his cherished possessions. Fortunately, his economic habits had prompted him to protect the precious and unique objects against any possible damage at the burial. Mack makes no comment, but his recovery sets in at once, and soon he performs his duties and exercises his rights with the same vigor and zest as before his illness.

Edvarda has inherited her father's sensuality. She has been married, but not to the man she loved, namely Glahn, in *Pan*, and consequently has become very unhappy. Her husband has fared worse, or rather has been the weaker of the two, and has made his exit by means of suicide. Edvarda, upon whose shoulders heredity, environment, and bringing-up have placed a heavy burden, is tormented by desire, for which she in vain seeks gratification in excesses. Nor does she find consolation in religion, to which she turns in her despair. But she is not without redeeming traits; sincere love for her two children and the earnest desire to have them brought up in such a manner that they will become better and happier than their mother stand out most prominently. In

the end, she gives a new content to her life by reclaiming an English gentleman, a periodic drinker, who for several years has been coming to Sirilund to fish. They are ultimately united. Though Hamsun is not a kind-hearted humanitarian, he sees the good in the souls of some of the most unfortunate of God's creatures. And even the evil appeals to him strongly where it is accompanied by greatness or at least vigor, frankness, and courage. The narrator of *Rosa* is but voicing the opinion of the author when he expresses admiration for Mack's gentlemanly bearing and actions and calls him a man with the soul of an imperator.

Exhibiting his irreverent attitude towards the old, Hamsun furnishes some repellent pictures of two old man-servants, who have lost the use of their minds and bodies, save that of their stomachs. They are treated with deference and kindness, but, alas, make life unbearable for those unfortunates that have to share their quarters. These ruins of men are cared for conscientiously, while an infant at their side is neglected, let alone that the child has to breathe in the miasmal atmosphere created by those living corpses.

Benoni and *Rosa* portray not only a number of interesting characters, but give also a good picture of the life at a small trading center in *Nordland*, half a century or more ago. It differs widely from the portrayals of *Nordland* which Jonas Lie has given us in *Den Fremsynte* (Second Sight), *Tremasteren Fremtiden* (The Barge Future), etc. Lie's works seem, by the side of Hamsun's, quite romantic, but even if we make allowance for this feature and take into account that Lie's themes are of a somewhat different nature, there still remains a wide gap, which must be primarily attributed to the different outlook upon life of these two novelists. That men of the type of Mack in former days met little hindrance in their polygamic mode of life, we may infer from Björnson's *Det flager i byen og paa havnen*⁵² (The Kurt Family), where he deals with a similar theme, but from an entirely different angle. What Hamsun's attitude towards the brutish lord who is the ancestor of the family in question would have been, we may infer from his poem *Drot* (Lord), but he would have shown the same sympathy for the sturdy peasant who so terribly avenges the honor of his

⁵² The translation of the title would read: "Flags are hoisted in the town and on the harbor."

daughter. While *Benoni* and *Rosa* may be regarded as reasonably objective, the picture as a whole is distorted by the irony of the author. He stands above his characters, but can see them only from a certain fixed point, that of superior knowledge, intelligence, and independence. It would be impossible for him to change his point of view, a manœuvre which some of the German romantics could carry out with such ease and perplexing effect. His irony has, of course, nothing in common with that famous, indefinable romantic irony, but it is of a kindly sort. What little there is of humor in these two works, is rather grotesque.

XI

Under Høststjernen (Under the Autumn Star), 1906, and *En Vandrør spiller med Sordin* (A Wanderer plays with Muted Strings), 1909, form also a unit, though not published consecutively. The story is told in the first person, and various features relating to the narrator are so devised that they fit well enough upon Knut Hamsun himself. Only in the first of these two novels, the narrator is also the most important figure; in the second, he relegates himself entirely to the background. The person in question is a man in middle life, cultured, with varied experiences and a wide knowledge of the world, gained by personal observation. He has seen foreign lands, is a man of social standing, though we are left in the dark concerning his position, and has now lived for many years in the city after the conventional manner of the better class. But his youth he has spent close to the soil, close to nature, and to nature he flees now, hoping to find in contact with her the peace of mind, vigor, and contentment of which city life has robbed him. Meeting Grindhusen, a laborer, with whom more than two decades ago he has been working side by side, he renews the old acquaintance and joins him in a piece of work, the digging of a well for the pastor of an adjoining parish.

We are not told what the name of this unusual fellow happens to be. On one occasion he calls himself Knut Pedersen. Knud Pedersen Hamsund is, indeed, the name over which the peasant story *Bjørger* was published by the author in 1878, but the situation here referred to would admit the assumption, in fact, seems to suggest it, that the name given by this fugitive from civilization is fictitious. Thereafter he is not mentioned by any name what-

soever throughout the two entire novels. The fact in itself would be hardly worth mentioning, if it did not afford a suggestion of the intimately personal character of the narrative. Knut, as we shall call him for convenience sake, falls in love with Elizabeth, the daughter of the pastor, a girl about twenty, but being distrustful of his ability to win her affection on account of his mature years, he rather avoids her, fearing that he might make himself ridiculous. From the parson's place he comes to the estate of Falkenberg, a landed proprietor and captain in the army, where he finds employment and promptly becomes infatuated with the captain's wife. The Falkenbergs have become indifferent to each other, but Mrs. Falkenberg is far from harboring any forbidden desires. When she discovers Knut's infatuation for her, she becomes alarmed, and in the end practically takes to flight to avoid meeting him again, for she is no longer so sure of herself as before. A trip to the city to make some purchases furnishes the needed pretext before her husband. Knut in his desperation follows her, transforms himself into the gentleman and thus seeks to gain access to her as her social equal. But she becomes suspicious and eludes him. Seeing himself foiled, Knut tries to drown his sorrows in alcohol, and after a three weeks' debauch he recovers his balance sufficiently to save himself by fleeing once more to some lonely island. This is a brief outline of *Under Høststjærnen*, the details of which fit well enough upon Hamsun himself. A few amorous adventures are suggested, though in unmistakable manner, rather than described; but the vagabond life which Knut and a fellow tramp lead on their wanderings is interestingly portrayed in detail. The moral side of the sexual question is here, as elsewhere, completely ignored.

This holds true also for the sequel, *En Vandrør spiller med Sordin*. Here, the relations between Falkenberg and his wife hold the center of the stage. Six years have passed since we first met them, things have gone from bad to worse and are now rapidly approaching a crisis. Our friend Knut turns up again in his rôle as laborér, just in time to live through it all. The Falkenbergs have been drawn to each other again, though they make studied efforts to conceal this fact. Their former love has come to life again, and each has initiated a vigorous campaign to win back the affection of the other by inciting jealousy. The captain all the while only pretends to be interested in another woman, but his wife loses control of herself, or is, at least, unable to resist the young

man with whom she has been flirting to arouse her husband, and the inevitable happens. The captain has strong reasons to suspect what has occurred, and when he asks for an explanation, the couple comes to the conclusion that it is best for them to separate. Mrs. Falkenberg now goes to her lover, an inconsiderate, unscrupulous, and conceited puppy, who rejoices over her arrival, but soon tires of her. It is, of course, far from his thoughts to make her his wife, as she had hoped.

After careful consideration, Falkenberg has decided to call his wife back to his home; she consents to come, and now the two discover that they have been anything but indifferent to each other. The captain might forgive and forget his wife's transgressions, though these have resulted in her pregnancy, if he were given time. But Mrs. Falkenberg has lost her mental and moral equilibrium, and during a prolonged absence of her husband, she decides on returning to her lover, to whom she looks for protection. When she meets with a rebuff, she commits suicide by drowning.

"Her fate was probably determined from the moment she was born. Husband and wife had tried to repair the damage, but they failed. I remember her as she was six years ago, she was bored and surely even then a little in love with one or the other, but she was faithful and refined. And the years went on. She had no duties to perform, for she had three servant girls at the place; she had no children, but she had a grand piano. But no children.

"And nature can afford to be wasteful.

"And mother and child went to the bottom."⁵³

Knut's affection for her remains constant throughout, but it has now become dispassionate, free from desire. After the final catastrophe, he seeks peace and consolation in his beloved forests and in a simple, primitive mode of life close to the heart of nature. He does not lament her loss. That it was granted to him to come into her presence, see her, hear her voice, and have her eyes rest upon him, all that was an undeserved blessing, and his memories of her will ever be a source of joy to him. Though it has gone unrewarded, his love for her has brought him great happiness.

There is much in these two works which is elusive or is left in doubt, but because the imagination of the reader is called upon to do its humble share, the effect of the simple narrative is only the stronger; and though it is in one respect extremely subjective, it

⁵³ *Verker*, VIII, *Vandrer*, p. 150.

produces the impression of being a canvas from real life. It is reality seen through the eyes of the author.

In *En Vandrers spillet med Sordin*, several erotic scenes are described in some detail, which is an uncommon feature in the works of Hamsun. The novel is rich in lyric elements. The author does not analyze emotions, nor does he attempt to lay bare the causes of action. He depicts and reproduces feelings in all their immediateness and directness. The motives which animate his characters are skilfully suggested rather than plainly stated.

In the epilogue, Hamsun has taken occasion to restate his philosophy of life. The main article of his creed is summed up in this sentence: "The mere boon that we were born into life, is a rich compensation paid to us aforehand for all the trials of existence, for each and every loss." Life is to him a blessing and a joy, no matter what the vicissitudes it may have in store for us. He still protests that advancing years do not bring us maturity and greater wisdom; but as the lusty vigor of our younger days is waning, we of necessity play with muted strings. Thus nature has decreed.

The views of literary and other sages—especially those of Ibsen—are held up to scorn and ridicule.

"Women—what do wise men know about women?"

"I remember a sage who wrote about women. He wrote thirty volumes of homogeneous poetry about women; I counted the books once on a large shelf. Finally he wrote about the woman who left her children to go and find—the miraculous. But what were the children then? Oh, it was so comical, and a wanderer laughs at the comical.

"What does the sage know about women?"

"In the first place, he did not become wise before he got old, and then, he knew women only from memory. Secondly, he had not even any memories of them, inasmuch as he had never known them. A man who has any talent for wisdom eagerly busies himself with this talent and with nothing else, he nurses and nourishes it, lifts it on a pedestal, and lives for it. One does not go to the women to become wise. The four wisest men in this world who have proclaimed judgments about women simply sat at home and invented them in their own minds, they were young or old dotards mounted on geldings. They did not know woman in her sacred-

ness, in her sweetness, in her indispensability; but they wrote about her. Just imagine, without ever meeting her!

"May God spare me from ever becoming wise! And I shall stammer it out to those standing around my death bed: God forbid that I ever should become wise."⁵⁴

It is evident enough that Hamsun will never become reconciled to a certain type of woman which Ibsen has depicted. He is aware of the fact that, alas, she really exists, but he treats her with scorn and proclaims her inferior. Motherhood is for him the highest goal and greatest happiness attainable for a woman. Nature has decreed that it should be thus, and emancipation from this law spells degeneracy. The development of the present age he deplores; it seems to him inimical to all true greatness.

"Things have taken a downward course, we have reached the bottom. And now the cobblers rejoice—not because we have all become equally great, but because we are all equally small."⁵⁵ City life, where the democratic tendencies of our times are most manifest, Hamsun detests. Knut Pedersen voluntarily works as a farm laborer, among the tillers of the soil and the woodsmen he is most content. But the modern proletariat, which looks down upon the farm laborer as a slave, he dislikes. And yet, the peasant and his mode of life are not idealized, or shown in a romantic light, as in the peasant stories of Björnson, and Hamsun has many a fault to find with the old-style, backward Norwegian peasant. As a matter of fact, the old peasant stock of the country receives but scanty attention. It is represented in occasional remarks as unintelligent, ultra-conservative, mercenary, deteriorating; its old virtues are fast disappearing. Where the spirit of the age is making its inroads upon the old peasantry, a change for the worse is the result.

In *Den siste Glæde* (The Ultimate Joy), 1912, purely personal elements are accorded considerable importance. The title admits of a two-fold interpretation. For Hamsun, the ultimate joy consists in solitude, for a woman, it is the child. Even a third one is possible, for the narrative incidentally records a last, impotent flutter of the author's own heart. The story is told by the wanderer whom we have already met, and this time his identity with Hamsun himself is plainly manifest. He reaffirms his love of the forests

⁵⁴ *Verker*, VIII, *Vandrør*, p. 155.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

and of nature in general, and his pantheism. "God is the beginning, and we human beings are verily mere dots and motes in the universe. . . . Eternity is only uncreated time, wholly uncreated time." No one knows God, human kind knows only gods. In communion with nature, Hamsun now and then catches a glimpse of his own God.

The simple life of the man who works the land he regards as the most natural, most useful, and, therefore, the best. It must not be inferred that Hamsun is a utilitarian. But the man on the land leads the sanest and most healthful life and produces what he needs to sustain it, enjoying therefore a larger degree of independence than the rest. Inasmuch as the modern development draws people farther and farther away from rural life, it is most harmful, and the culture it is supposed to produce is but a sham; through it the race simply becomes more effeminate and degenerate. A very demoralizing influence Hamsun sees in the tourist traffic of modern times. A great deal of emphasis is placed on this topic. The desire to encourage and promote tourist travel in Norway he calls the modern Norwegian 'staggers.' For Switzerland, where catering to visitors from foreign lands has become one of the chief industries, he has nothing but utter contempt, and he laments greatly the fact that so many of his fellow countrymen are inclined and eager to follow the example of the Swiss people. Since the Englishmen constitute the largest contingent of tourists in Norway, Hamsun finds repeated occasion to assail them. They are for him but masquerading idiots for whom sport has become a mania. Just as in ancient Rome, when she was ruling the world, the most unnatural vices now flourish in England.

But the chief attack of the work under discussion is directed against modern education, more particularly against the education of women. As we have seen, Hamsun regards the home and the child as the only proper sphere for women. Modern education does not prepare a woman for her task. Let alone that all book-learning is worthless, young women of the middle class, among whom the aspiration for learning is most pronounced, are thrown out of their course by the educational process, are forced into a life of sterility, and become perverse. Even if such a woman ultimately recovers her balance, immeasurable harm has been done. She has, in the first place, wasted the most valuable years of her life, and is, moreover, helpless in the tasks and problems

confronting her as wife and mother. Public life, social and political activities, intellectual endeavor, seem to Hamsun for the most part sheer humbug. It is bad enough that the men waste their time on them; if the women meddle with them, too, incalculable detriment to the race is the inevitable result. These views Hamsun had already proclaimed in a summary and abstract fashion in his *Himmelbrev til Byron*; here he deals with them in more concrete form.

The meager plot of the novel is furnished by the erotic aberrations of Miss Torsen, a school teacher. The young woman is high up in her twenties, strong, healthy, and—perverse. And her perversity is the direct result of her education and of her calling, into which she was led by the former. After her first amorous transgression, it seems as though she were doomed to utter ruin, as is usually the case, according to the author.

"She had fallen; having once for all been despoiled, she gave herself away, why exercise any reserve now! And that is the fate of the type, women of the type Torsen throw themselves away in ever increasing degree, exercise less and less reserve, why should they! It may end in extremes; things go from bad to worse. The type is known well enough, it is to be found in sanatoriums and mountain resorts, there it thrives and bursts into blossom.

"There the young lady arrives with the weariness resulting from years spent in useless efforts, her diploma, and her 'independence,' she comes more or less worn out from the office or the school room and finds herself suddenly transplanted into absolute idleness, with plenty of food at her meals. The people around her are changing all the time. Tourists come and go, she passes from hand to hand in walks and conversations, the tone is 'like that of the country folk.' This sort of life is sheer vagrancy, is stripped of all rational meaning. She does not even get sleep enough, through the thin board partition, she hears every move of her neighbor in the adjoining room, and arriving or departing Anglo-Saxons go and bang the doors in the middle of the night. In a short time she has become abnormal, tired of people, sick with disgust of herself and the place; if only a decent organ grinder would come, she would run off with him! She associates with any one that happens along, she flirts with the guide of the place, hovers about him, ties up his sore finger, finally she goes with a certain good-for-nothing who has just recently arrived.

"That is the Torsen type.

"And now, at this moment, she moves about in her room and gets herself ready to leave—the summer having gone by. Oh, yes, she takes a good deal of time, there are so many remnants of her, one in every nook and corner. But, meanwhile, she possibly consoles herself with the fact that she 'knows the genitive case of *mensa*.'"⁵⁶

But Miss Torsen has enough of true womanhood left in her, it would seem, to cry halt ere it is too late. She ultimately redeems herself by marrying a simple but thrifty peasant, a taciturn, homely fellow with the strength of a horse, who is akin to Isac, whom we shall soon meet. She takes upon herself the humble duties of a peasant woman, and when the first child arrives, she learns to know what real happiness is, regretting now deeply that she has wasted so many precious years wandering in the dreary desert of education. The contention that she, because of her educational training, possesses superior qualification for motherhood, would seem to Hamsun preposterous. Another topic here dealt with, which deserves our attention, is his opinion of the man who has passed the zenith of life. Though he himself is now on the wrong side of fifty, he maintains as emphatically as ever that a man of fifty is old and cannot hope for further achievements. He speaks of some large irons which he has in the fire, but later on finds that they are nothing to boast of.

"They are the irons of a man of fifty, he has not any better ones. But the difference between me and my fellow authors is that I confess: I have none better. They were conceived so large and fiery, but they are only small irons and they glow but faintly. Such are the facts. But the question is whether or not my works in spite of everything still distinguish themselves from the trash of others. That you cannot settle, you are the new spirit of Norway, and it is you that I scorn and ridicule.

"People say that with advancing years there come other joys which one knew nothing of before, there come deeper joys, more lasting joys. It is a lie. Yes, you have read correctly: it is a lie. It is only the old people themselves who say this, the interested one, who wants to show off with his remnants. He has no longer any recollection of himself when he stood at the summit, he him-

⁵⁶ *Verker*, IX, *Den siste Glæde*, pp. 92 f.

self, his own *alias*, milk and blood, and blew his golden trumpet. Now he does not stand—no, for he has sat down—yes, for it is easier to sit. And now there comes to him slowly and tardily, viscous and stupid, the honor of old age. What is a sitting man to do with honor? A man standing erect may use it, a man sitting down can only hoard it. But honor is intended for use, it is not a thing to sit down with.

“Let a man sitting down get warm stockings.

“As if it were a question of holding death at a distance from a man who has already begun to die gradually. I do not understand such a way of thinking, but you, with your jolly, common-place nature and your book-learning, probably do. A man with but **one** arm is still able to walk, and a one-legged man can still lie down. And what have you learned about the forests? But what did I learn in the forests? That young trees are standing there.

“Now young people are rising all about me that all the stupid rabble most impudently, most barbarously underestimates, simply because they are young. I have looked upon this for many years. I know nothing more contemptible than your book-learning. Whether you have a catechism or a pair of compasses to guide you, it is all the same.”⁵⁷

Just as Hamsun in his youth was opposed and held down by the older men who sat with influence and power in their hands, young talents of the present generation are ignored and suppressed, while the world should eagerly welcome them, Hamsun, the unswerving champion of the young, emphatically declares. It is to be regretted that in this connection he fails to name at least a few of these young people of promise. He tries to arouse his fellow countrymen, but is aware that his efforts are in vain.

“To you, the new spirit in Norway, I have written these lines during a pestilence and because of a pestilence. I cannot stop the pestilence, no, it is unconquerable now, it is holding sway under national protection and *tararabomdeay*. But some day it will stop after all. Meanwhile, I do what I can against it, you do the opposite.”⁵⁸

There is considerable bitterness, irony, sarcasm, and even invective in this novel, but the outstanding features are its stern truthfulness and sincerity. Hamsun judges no one more severely

⁵⁷ *Verker*, IX, *Den siste Glæde*, pp. 30, 112, 178 f.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 180.

than himself. And in spite of all his disappointment, he proclaims as of old: "Life is a loan, I am grateful for the loan."

XII

Livet ivold (In the Grip of Life), 1910, is the last play which Hamsun has produced thus far. Recent achievements of the author make it very unsafe to venture any predictions, whether or not he will again cultivate this field. In spite of his theory about the man of fifty, he is far from bankrupt, now that he has passed sixty-one.

The drama is the tragedy of a simple, primitive woman, for whom sensual love is the sole content of life. She cannot even conceive of anything else to take its place. Being well aware that she is continually losing ground, she fights desperately to retain her hold on life, but in vain. The tragic nature of the theme is not in the least obscured by numerous elements of a humorous kind.

"Life" is here synonymous with the sexual instinct. This latter constitutes the dynamic force in this rapidly moving production; all action originates from the characters, outside factors play no part. In a sense, there is no plot, only a series of happenings leading to the final catastrophe, without any recourse to the past as in the case of the analytic drama. The development is precipitous, the time required for the presentation on the stage, with the necessary pauses between the acts, is ample to allow, without the least violence to probability, for the occurrence of all the events portrayed. In effect, the play is naturalistic, but differentiated from most productions of this type by the absence of any thesis to be demonstrated.

The characters are the only thing of importance; they do not represent types, but individuals, some of them highly eccentric individuals, indeed. There is, first of all, Mrs. Juliana Gihle, a former vaudeville actress, but now safely in port as the spouse of a rich old dotard. Juliana's triumphs as an actress have been far surpassed by those off the stage, but both rested on the sensual appeal of her person. She has seen men of wealth, rank, and title, even crowned heads at her feet, and she has not been deaf to their entreaties. But, alas, the inconstancy of men! Each one whom she has taken into her favor has left her in his turn, she has passed through many hands, but her course has ever borne downward, and the stream of gold which has flowed through her pretty fingers

has gradually diminished and finally ceased. When she became alarmed over her future, she resolutely made provision for it by ensnaring the wealthy old bachelor Gihle in matrimony, and as her appetite is by no means satiated as yet, she has sought gratification of her mad desire elsewhere. But the lover she has found is slipping through her fingers like all his predecessors, in spite of all her frantic efforts and material sacrifices to hold him. And so she ends with a negro, as she herself has often jokingly prophesied.

Mrs. Juliana Gihle knows no scruples or deterrents save one: she is in mortal fear of a public scandal. Now that she has acquired social station, she is anxious to observe the strictest decorum—in public. For she is not stupid, as she again and again assures us. Far from it. Next to being sensual, she is mercenary, clever, but at the same time kind-hearted and benevolent.

The negro who is left to her as a final consolation, a young and lusty fellow, is a bequest of his master, Bast, one of Juliana's past lovers, who is paying a brief visit in his native country and has brought 'Boy' with him as his servant. Bast has stripped himself of all conventions and morals during his long stay in the Argentine Republic, and has nothing but contempt for modern culture. He virtually knows no law but his own will; he blows out a man's brain, if circumstances make it desirable, with the same unconcern with which he would snuff out a candle. But he is willing to give and take. If it is his turn next time, good and well. Not that he is tired of life, not in the least. But a life over which he should have to watch carefully in some manner or other in order to preserve it, would be worthless to him. The author gives him a chance to prove that such talk is not mere theory, and Bast makes his exit without complaint or even murmur. A man after Hamsun's own heart.

In Lieutenant Lynum we have an individual laced in the straight jacket of the officer's code of honor, inflexible and consistent. When he thinks he has forfeited his life according to his own standards, he does not hesitate to dispatch himself. Loyal to his conceptions to the last, he exchanges his uniform, so as not to bring disgrace upon it, for civilian garb. Bast and Lynum represent two extremes, but they have one important trait in common, their consistency.

The musician Fredriksen is, like Mrs. Juliana, a former member of the theatrical profession. In his early manhood he was a

very able and promising violinist, now he has sunk to the level of orchestra leader in a café. He has no hope and no illusions any longer. We are all on the way to our executions, he holds. But why should we hang our heads, let us go down to the tune of a merry waltz. The habitual frequenters of the café where he plays give him plenty of opportunity to convince himself of the correctness of his views. All these characters, Mrs. Juliana included, arouse a certain amount of sympathy in us, no matter what their faults and follies, and how deep their fall. But upon Juliana's lover, Alexander Blumenschøn, we turn our backs in disgust, for he is a cowardly, mercenary soul without a single redeeming trait. Hamsun puts stress on the fact that Blumenschøn is of Swiss extraction.

The one character which appeals to us unreservedly is Fanny Norman, a young girl in her teens, to whom Blumenschøn is engaged. She is still as pure as the driven snow and as naive as a child. Only now, upon contact with those persons who have been buffeted about and marred and mutilated by life, does she catch the first glimpse of its sordid realities.

In old Mr. Gihle and his equally aged cousin Theodor, Hamsun makes another thrust at senile imbecility, for which he cannot muster any patience, as we already know.

The play is very cynical in its attitude towards life, and since the theme, moreover, is in itself not attractive, it has been accorded but a lukewarm reception, though some admirers of Hamsun speak highly of it. It reads like a dramatization of certain chapters in Sudermann's *Das hohe Lied* (The Song of Songs). Also, in some of Schnitzler's and Hofmannsthal's works, a similar note is struck, but in Schnitzler's men and women, a striking feature is the weary scepticism with which they participate in the game of life, while those of Hofmannsthal often seem but the victims of a mysterious destiny or potentialities suddenly breaking forth from the realm of the subconscious. The chief characters in *Livet ivold* are actuated by their ruling passions, which are fierce and strong, and they do not exhibit the tired, indulgent smile of Schnitzler's figures, with the possible exception of Fredriksen. It would not do to ascribe the philosophy of Hamsun's characters in this drama unreservedly to the author himself. Though the struggle of mankind seems to him often but a farce, his attitude

is generally tempered by a deep sympathy and compassion with his fellow men, which, indeed, also here is not lacking.

XIII

One might well adduce Hamsun's later works to refute, at least as far as the intellect is concerned, his contention that after fifty the decline sets in universally and inevitably, for they surpass in an ascending scale many of his earlier productions both in regard to technique and scope. *Børn av Tiden* (Children of the Time), 1913, portrays quite in detail a number of very interesting individuals. The central figure is Lieutenant Willatz Holmsen, a country gentleman of the old school, the absolute ruler of his domain, strong-headed, violent of temper, sensitive, and proud. But if Willatz Holmsen rules like an absolute despot over his dependents, he also assumes responsibility for their weal and woe. *Noblesse oblige*. Unfortunately the estate which he inherited from his father was greatly reduced in size and encumbered by heavy debts, and since Willatz Holmsen can only spend, not earn, it must go rapidly backward with him. He does not squander any money on himself, quite the contrary, but the faintest wish on the part of his wife, or the suggestion of one of his underlings looking to him for assistance, even in matters not at all pertaining to their immediate needs, prompts him to see the particular affair in the light of a moral obligation, and he shoulders it at once. Holmsen regards it as one of the duties incumbent upon him to have his purse ever open, and the admission that he is hard pressed for money would seem to him a disgrace. His methods of farming and of doing business in general are hopelessly obsolete; in fact, he considers any deal in which he would be the gainer as far beneath him. There is no one in the neighborhood with whom he could transact any business, until the arrival of Holmengraa, a native of the district, who as a mere boy has gone out into the world to seek his fortune and finally has acquired modest wealth in Mexico. His fellow countrymen, with their naive belief in and longing for the miraculous adventures of the fairy tale, have made Tobias Holmengraa's wealth something fabulous; in their eyes he is a veritable king. This is not at all displeasing to him, for he returns chiefly to play a rôle and bask in the admiration of his former equals, and since he knows their psychology full well, he plays his part successfully. But out in the world he has also learned how to

deal with as sensitive and proud a man as Lieutenant Holmsen. The economic difficulties of the latter play into Holmengraa's hands, and in the course of time, he acquires one tract of land, one concession after another, until he has the haughty lieutenant in his pocket. But Holmsen is a man of the true Hamsun type. Adversity does not crush him or even humble him; on the contrary, it increases his pride and defiance. His own life is well-nigh spent, and the collapse of his fortune matters only little to him personally; but it is to him a sacred duty to secure to his son, if possible, the same economic independence which he has enjoyed. And knowing that no exertion on his part can turn the tide, he begins to hunt for a treasure, buried by his grandfather long ago during the war. When he has given up all hope, he finds it by accident. The quest of his life has thereby come to a close; the terrible strain under which he has lived, especially during the last few years, is removed, but simultaneously also the spur to his will, and now he breaks down physically. He scornfully rejects the aid of the physician, as well as that of the pastor, and calmly waits for the end. But even during his last days, he jealously guards his honor and strives to perform his duties as he sees them. The telegraph operator Baardsen, like his colleague Rolandsen a social outcast and derelict, but also like Holmsen a strong and consistent individualist, is the only human being whose society the dying man can endure. To him he entrusts with perfect confidence his last wishes and commissions.

An iron will, independence, lofty pride, scrupulous honesty, devotion to his duty, and conservative adherence to the old, inherited standards are the chief traits in the make-up of Lieutenant Holmsen. The philosophy of the humanists is his guide and consolation. Though highly imperious and of violent temper, he goes far in his concessions to the individuality and rights of others. In Holmsen we have a type which, as regards his social and economic status, has virtually become extinct; also his philosophy of life is a thing of the past. Judged from a general point of view, he represents a reversion to the type figuring so prominently in the earlier works of Hamsun. He, too, lives in spiritual isolation and jealously guards his independence; as far as his inner life is concerned, he negates the existence of society and in contact with it, he strives to rise above it by retaining complete mastery of his personal fate. By a strange method of self-deception, he persuades

himself that he acts from choice where external circumstances really compel his actions. Thus, for instance, he takes up his abode in an old, scarcely habitable out-building, a brick-yard, when he thinks that Holmengraa may any day foreclose his mortgage on the mansion. No one shall eject him from his home, he himself chooses to leave it. By determining resolutely upon the thing necessary, he preserves his personal liberty. It does not matter that it is really an illusion, intentionally created, which accomplishes the end.

His wife, Adelheid, shares his pride and stubbornness, but cannot attain to his independence. In the relations of the two, we have a parallel to those between Captain Falkenberg and his spouse. The struggle is of a different nature, since pride is such a pronounced trait in both husband and wife. Hamsun never relinquishes his superiority, always treats Adelheid politely, and only momentarily betrays his wounded feelings when his efforts to establish once more intimate relations are rebuffed. But one day he decides that it is enough, and when Adelheid, later on, seeks reconciliation on her part, he coolly tells her that it is too late now.

Various features indicate that Adelheid suffers a fate very similar to Mrs. Falkenberg's, but we are left to draw our own conclusions. Hamsun is fond of this device; he presents the evidence, which at times is highly ambiguous, the reader must formulate the verdict.

While Hamsun and a few minor characters belong to a type which is fast disappearing, a number of figures from the lower walks of life are depicted with relative objectivity who fully justify the title of the novel. They are indeed children of our time, though not of our clime. Most American readers would consider the economic and social conditions here portrayed very primitive, the mental horizon of the people narrow, their outlook upon life ridiculously naive, and their morals low and crude. But we must bear in mind that the scene is *Nordland* and that Hamsun possesses the most intimate knowledge of his subject. In this novel and the two following upon it, there is no particular evidence of exaggeration and little irony; the picture presented is fairly objective, and therein consists the chief value of these works.

It has already been pointed out that Hamsun is akin to the typical heroes of Hamsun's earlier works, he lacks, however, their intimate relation to nature. Hamsun is a pure product of culture.

The latter, we are informed, is not at all obtainable through education; its acquisition presupposes real wealth through a number of generations in a given family. A class considering itself in the possession of culture, and also so regarded by others, is that of the officials. Holmsen, however, has nothing but contempt for them, which he shares with the author.

"The civil officials—no, they are really a miserable class of people. The son following in the footsteps of his father, generation upon generation mere copying clerks. Recruited from peasant boys who 'work themselves up.' As a matter of fact, they work themselves down, I am sure, from able fishermen and farmers to clerks and ministers. But never mind. There seems to exist a law that officials must propagate officials; why so, I pray? Just look about you, only the most indispensable ability and no progress. Mediocrity flourishes. Average honesty, average capability in their particular fields, I grant it, but superiority, greatness, where can you point to them? The son following his father, generation upon generation the same thing. . . . There is no possibility of any adverse fortune, no bolt ever smites them. The father has begun by copying, the son is to do the same thing, and that they call acquiring culture. I for my part get more satisfaction out of talking with one of my laborers than with one of our officials."⁵⁹

Though out and out an aristocrat, Holmsen urges one of his friends to let his daughter marry the captain's mate, with whom she is in love, rather than some official, on whom the mother, herself the daughter of an official, insists in her foolish pride. Holmsen is led by eugenic considerations. The simple man will bring a much needed infusion of vigor and health to the union. To the objection that the captain's mate is of humble origin and culturally not above a common sailor, he retorts:

"One can also build one's life on nature. Just as surely as an official cannot build his life on culture, which he does not have and cannot have, since culture is not book-learning, the captain's mate can very well build his life on nature. You may object that he, too, really is no longer pure nature, but he is the one of the two who has lost least of his naturalness, he is the more bearable of the two."⁶⁰

⁵⁹ *Verker*, IX, *Børn av Tiden*, p. 67.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

In Lars Lassen, a fisherman's son, who has worked himself up and has become a minister of the gospel, one of the shining lights, who some day is sure to become a pillar of the church and state, we are given a concrete example of the culture which the civil officials possess. There are several other representatives of officialdom in this present novel and its sequel which also confirm Holmsen's and Hamsun's views. The latter co-incide closely with Arne Garborg's.

Børn av Tiden covers a span of about twenty years. In the beginning Lieutenant Holmsen is still the undisputed master of the whole district, a benevolent despot, a sort of Providence for the people. His will is supreme, even the minister, the representative of the state, has to come to terms and must drop all red tape in reference to the erection of a new church which Holmsen is building for the community. The minister insists that the proper authorities must approve the plans, that they have a right to demand their modification, if they consider it desirable. Not a bit of it. With Holmsen it is take it or leave it. I am the donor, and with me rests the decision.

There is a certain parallel between Lieutenant Holmsen and Ferdinand Mack of *Pan*, *Benoni*, and *Rosa*. The weal and woe of the common people depends largely on the good will of these men; both are the product of culture, which has resulted from the wealth in the possession of their families for several generations, but in character they differ widely.

As the financial control slips into the hands of Holmengraa, economic conditions change at Segelfoss, which is the name of Holmsen's estate. Holmengraa engages in various activities and enterprises, chief among them the erection of a mansion and a mill; laborers from other parts of the country come into the district; money, up to his arrival a rare commodity, begins to circulate freely; the people in general accustom themselves to higher standards of living and—become dissatisfied. Of course, a store has been established. A smart peasant, *Per paa Bua* (Peter in the Store), is running it. To make money is his religion, but his methods are antiquated; stinginess in his own household and the conduct of his business, short weight and the wrong change when children are sent to the store, and the like are his principal means of amassing a fortune. When he is caught at his tricks, he grumblingly and unblushingly makes things right, but there is no

possibility of breaking him of his habits. Per has the typical traits of the greedy, backward peasant; he thrives in his new occupation.

When Lieutenant Holmsen dies, the sphere of his authority has narrowed down to a mere shadow of what it formerly was. In *Segelfoss By* (Segelfosstown), 1915, the transformation of the place is progressing. The principal figures from the preceding novel, with the exception of Lieutenant Holmsen and Adelheid who are both dead, have been carried along, but there are also quite a number of new characters. Segelfoss has become a town, Hamsun needs had to use a larger canvas to depict its life than he required in *Børn av Tiden*. The Holmsen fortune has been retrieved, but the son and heir lives abroad, studying music. In him the cultural process which has been going on through several generations reaches the stage of fruition. His influence upon the general development at Segelfoss is insignificant; it is not because of any effort on the part of Willatz Holmsen the Fourth that finally the controlling power reverts into his hands. At the outset it is still vested in Holmengraa, but the position of the latter is insecure. All went well while he was the king, a myth, in the eyes of the people. But when he is confronted with the actual task of managing affairs, he finds himself wanting. He is not a born master of men like the lieutenant, he does not command the respect of the people and undermines what little he possesses by his amorous pursuits of simple servant girls, especially since he therein meets with repeated failures. The laborers that he has brought to Segelfoss are up-to-date socialists. The little sheet which is published in the town keeps them alert to the fact that they are wage slaves exploited by capital, in their case represented by Holmengraa. Trouble ensues and Holmengraa must haul down his colors. He has been styled a "captain of industry" in a recent article,⁶¹ but strange to say, he has not even a system of checking up the supplies issued to his workmen for use in his mill. Because of this state of affairs, they have obtained on his account various articles for their own consumption: kerosene, canvas, even margarine; and since no itemized bills are submitted, it takes Holmengraa a long time to discover the practice. If all captains of industry were of the same character, we should have sovietism over night.

⁶¹ *Knut Hamsun*. By Hanna Astrup Larsen. *American-Scandinavian Review*, July, 1921. A splendid, brief sketch, but I cannot agree with Miss Larsen's appraisal of some of the characters in *Segelfoss By*.

"Holmengraa was born a peasant and belonged, accordingly, to a species with which evolution had not gotten any further than to keep it from becoming extinct. All he knew, he had picked up; all those precious values which hover in the air about cultured people, their mode of expression included, he had made his personal possession—well done, Mr. Holmengraa, really brilliant! But he was two hundred years younger than the family of Segelfoss manor; he had learned to greet people, but he greeted with the spirit of a slave."⁶² Such a thing will not do for a captain of industry.

Holmengraa is, however, no dunce; he possesses a certain spirit of enterprise, is shrewd, knows how to impress the simple folk, and shows even skill in handling the proud lieutenant, whose psychological make-up, to be sure, is not in the least complex. He is also familiar with certain dubious devices to deceive the people. When they begin to speculate about his solvency, he has a spurious telegram sent to him, offering him a large sum for a ship which he has afloat somewhere in the wide world, and forgets the message where its discovery will produce the wished-for effect. Nagel (*Mysterier*) plays a similar trick, but his motive is purely mystification, it seems. Holmengraa also likes to mystify the country population. He skilfully plays on the child-like imagination of the people on his arrival; later, he impresses them by displaying a ring with the emblems of free masonry; and before he departs, he has a strong vault built, which he finally leaves empty and open, as he ostentatiously embarks on his own ship, requisitioned for the purpose; and the people have again a chance to guess. He once more has become "King Tobias" for them. Who can tell what is really back of him? His former employees, who are out of work and in want because they virtually forced him to close down his mill, stand there with long faces. It dawns upon them at last that after all it was Holmengraa who gave them bread. Hamsun calls him an adventurer who corrupted the district by making money circulate freely. Not everybody has sense and character enough to endure prosperity. "The instincts of these people are those of the proletariat, their dissatisfaction does not result from actual want, their maws are always gaping for more, still more."⁶³

⁶² *Verker*, IX *Børn av Tiden*., p. 191.

⁶³ *Verker*, X, p. 331.

The balance of power has been slowly shifting in Segelfosstown. Theodor *paa Bua*, who is now running the business which his father has established, has built a large store and succeeds much better than his progenitor in getting hold of the dollar in the other man's pocket. He has discovered the secret of creating a demand. His father has carried only the articles really required; Theodor "brings the world to Segelfoss: silk dresses, canned goods, store shoes, fireworks, a theatrical troupe—everything, even to tombstones suddenly blossoming out on graves forgotten for twenty years." But the home industries deteriorate, and the people with them. "The men read the *Segelfoss Times*, which tells them that they are wage slaves; the women forget to weave and sew and cook, while they buy flimsy ready-made clothes and predigested food 'like a huge pap put into the mouth of the nation for it to suck'; and the village shoemaker starves to death for lack of work." That is the reverse of the medal.

But Per, who lies up-stairs paralyzed on one side, does not object on that account, oh no; he simply storms and raves against Theodor, in part because he considers the ventures of his son sheer folly, but chiefly because he does not want the control to slip from his hands, and he can, of course, not follow Theodor's pace. There ensues a ruthless struggle between father and son in which the bed-ridden man necessarily succumbs, though he does not give up until the end finally comes. And Per, indeed, dies hard.

In his private conduct Theodor reminds one of Benoni. In the first place, he, like Benoni, strives to win a young woman who is socially above him, Mariane, the daughter of Holmengraa; furthermore, both men make themselves ridiculous by trying to ape the ways of the world and give themselves airs. Theodor shows here a little more aptitude and he will ultimately play his part quite well. The vanity of the two men and their desire to impress people are strikingly similar.

It is not incomprehensible that Benoni wins Rosa, the daughter of the pastor; the social gap is bridged over by Benoni's money, Rosa has become somewhat depreciated by her marriage to Arentsen, and in their views of life they are not so widely separated from each other as to make a common understanding impossible. Theodor's case is different; Mariane does not look down upon him, but her whole inner life is beyond his reach. He is, indeed, of the "most malodorous origins," and still we may inquire: how about

Holmengraa, the "captain of industry," a distant relative of Theodor's mother? Well, for one thing, he has early in life escaped from those surroundings, and he is provided with money the moment he appears on the scene. *Non olet*. Theodor will some day reach this stage likewise; in the absence of both Holmsen and Holmengraa, he is already the most influential man of Segelfoss-town. For the realization of his most ardent wish, to be sure, the final elevation will come too late. But Theodor will never die of a broken heart.

Mariane holds so high a rank socially that Reverend L. Lassen, this great genius that Segelfoss has given to the country and the world, deems her worthy to become his spouse, but she fails to appreciate the honor conferred upon her. She is finally won by young Willatz, and entirely by his own efforts and the manliness of his character. The young lady is odd, independent, and capricious enough—she has Indian blood in her veins—to incite him to strive for her possession. Of Willatz Holmsen the Fourth we are told that "democracy has seeped into his tissues." Yes, indeed, how could it be otherwise, since the atmosphere is saturated with it; but the question is: how have his tissues reacted? Have they been infected or have they been able to throw off the harmful bacilli? We must decidedly assume the latter. *Noblesse oblige* is also for him a valid principle. When at a public auction, he meets a lady, a piano teacher, in tears, because her valuable instrument is to be sold to satisfy her creditors, he unhesitatingly redeems it. "What else could I have done, dear father?" he writes in the letter asking for the sum needed. It may be said: even an arch-democrat might do so. But how about the following? A particularly impudent laborer insults Holmengraa on the public highway. Willatz is in Holmengraa's company. "Willatz turned pale and stopped. One moment, he said, turning around. Now he goes back, taking off his gloves leisurely as he walks along. There comes his son-in-law, said Aslak; let us pay our respects to his son-in-law, he said. Willatz steps up to him, his fist flashes through the air, and there lies Aslak."⁶⁴ Aslak has Willatz haled before the magistrate and demands damages. Willatz voluntarily pays double the amount asked. "But, said young Willatz when

⁶⁴ *Verker*, X, p. 169.

he had counted up the money, next time this man deserves that I punish him, I shall strike harder."⁶⁵

Later on, he gives Aslak work to reclaim him if possible. When asked what he would do with the dishonest laborers, who, moreover, by loafing at their work make Holmengraa's venture unproductive, he replies: "If there were any lack of rabble, I would let them live and propagate."⁶⁶

We should say, young Willatz Holmsen is an aristocrat from top to toe, just like his father. He is, moreover, a real artist, and Hamsun would find the idea preposterous that he had depicted an artist with the divine spark in his soul who is—an adherent of democracy. Young Willatz is in some respects weak, for he is but an echo of his father, whose ideas he repeats, only slightly modified by modern theories. A very elucidating instance we find in his views about the civil officials. That which gives him a distinct individuality is his art.

Reverend L. Lassen and his family receive a great deal of attention. The whole town looks up to this distinguished citizen, if we except his brother Julius, who treats his great brother with contempt. He knows him too well. The family is as malodorous as Theodor's. Both Julius and the father steal and cheat; Daverdana, the pretty sister of Reverend Lassen, is an excellent wife and mother, but her charms are such that all men desire her, and occasionally she does not say them nay. Thus, Lassen has to make continuous efforts to suppress various scandals which might injure the career he is sure and anxious to make, though he has not yet learned to keep his wrists and neck clean.

Hamsun has far more to spare for the other members of the Larsen family than for the worthy pastor who, it should be noted, out of sheer vanity, has changed the name to the more gentil Lassen. Moral offences the author views with his accustomed spirit of tolerance. A general debauch which forms the conclusion—not foreseen in the program—of a lawn party given by the lawyer Rasch, he merely suggests by means of the laconic statement: "After the party, a large part of the shrubs and flowers were found tramped down, and in the thickets not less than eighteen hair combs were discovered, among them one with a red glass bead." It is the only one in town and belongs to the pretty Daverdana.

⁶⁵ *Verker*, X, p. 175.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 215.

The attitude of the author towards scholarship is well illustrated by his account of L. Lassen's achievements.

"His doctor's thesis treated of some Norwegian clergymen of the sixteenth century and was cribbed from the *Danish Magazine*, the Norwegian state records, and the *Diplomatarium Norwegicum*—also the *Norwegian Magazine*, he would have added, if he had heard this summing up, for he was a conscientious scholar. His next treatise dealt with the famous name Nescio and contained many important scientific discoveries, among others that it was in the year 1513, and not in the year 1512, that the hero departed 'to obtain greater bliss in the life beyond,' furthermore that two years before his departure on the above mentioned errand, he was engaged in a lawsuit against the senate of Hamburg—this was the fourteenth of his lawsuits. In this work, our boy Lars achieved a signal triumph, and inasmuch as he, already long ago, had been made a member of the Academy of Science, he had to be decorated with the Olav Cross—now he really was somebody."⁶⁷

The attorney Rasch and the physician of the district, Dr. Muus (*mus* = mouse), are further representatives of the official class who verify Hamsun's views. Rasch tries to get into the saddle by playing politics and courting the favor of the masses. While he gets along nicely and in the end is elected to the *storting*, Theodor is far ahead of him as concerns actual power.—Much space is devoted in *Segelfoss By* to illustrate the inferiority of officialdom by concrete examples.

Of the many other characters in this motley picture, pulsating with intense life, the telegraph operator Baardsen requires especial mention. He belongs to the type of which Hamsun was so fond in his earlier days. Baardsen possesses all the traits which we met in Nagel and Munken Vendt, with the exception of their close relation to nature; he finds his consolation in playing his cello.—Nagel was a splendid violinist in his youth, it should be remembered.—His kin, Baardsen, has a wealthy father, but he has cast loose from his family, which has endeavored in vain to get him well established in life. In his present position he could live comfortably and care-free, yes, even play a rôle in Segelfoss society, if he chose; but the game does not seem to him worth the candle. He trains a young man in the art of the dispatcher and finally turns over the office to him, pays his last debt, buys a last mouthful of crackers, takes his

⁶⁷ *Verker*, X, p. 303.

beloved cello to Segelfoss manor as a souvenir for young Willatz, and, starved, ill-clad in zero weather, suffering from pneumonia, he winds his way to the vacant place of Holmengraa where he goes into the empty vault, so much talked about by the people, and sits down to die—"in his boots," like Munken Vendt. Not until some time after, his body is found.

Baardsen does not storm, like Nagel and Munken Vendt, not so much because it does not lie in his nature, but because he knows the futility of such a procedure. There is not a trace of bitterness in him and he remains inwardly proud, independent, and erect to the end. It has been contended that Baardsen's fate indicates a change in the attitude of Hamsun, a disavowal of his former ideals, but there are no grounds for such an assumption. To be sure, Baardsen perishes, a fate which he shares with all the others of his type, but Hamsun does not disapprove of him. At the very most, he injects here and there a drop of his irony in the treatment of this character, but he also bestows upon it more sympathy than upon any of the others. The fact that Baardsen's death is the last topic dealt with in *Segelfoss By* is in itself not without strong significance. The last paragraph of the novel reads:

"The two men (who found Baardsen's body) hurry down again to Segelfosstown and to the store. They come and solve a mystery—they perhaps don't solve it after all, but they feel big over the news they bring. They go and chatter and prattle: he sat in the cellar, he was dead—all the people get to know it, they listen to the tidings, ponder them a little, and then they continue their daily occupations. That is the end of it. But straight to the south the swans are playing."⁶⁸

It is through Baardsen that the author expresses his own estimate of the wave of progress which has struck Segelfosstown.

"We witness nothing in the present age which can be compared to the past. Traffic and commerce? Trumpery, stacks of yellow silk kerchiefs. Our lives have run wild, the horses are without a driver; and since the horses know that it is easier going down-hill than up-hill, they are moving down-hill. Down with us, the deeper the better. Life has become farcical, what we work and strive for, is clothing and food, we give an imitation of living. In olden days, there existed great differences, there was the castle and the desert, now all are alike. In olden days, it was fate, now

⁶⁸ *Verker*, X, p. 354.

it is a question of wages. Greatness, what is it? The horses have pulled it down. Let me, too, have a kilogram of greatness, how much is it? We each buy ourselves a set of teeth for the mouth and we establish a new intestinal flora in our stomachs, the same for all, uniform along the whole line; we divide life up among ourselves, dilute the air for each other, and leave behind us a world more confused and abused for each generation."⁶⁹

What to most people would seem laudable progress, is for Hamsun deterioration without any mitigating feature.

XIV *or the field*

In *Markens Grøde* (The Growth of the Soil),⁷⁰ 1917, he turned completely away from civilization and to the most primitive conditions existing in *Nordland*, in itself the land of the primitive. *Markens Grøde* is easily Hamsun's best novel and supposedly furnished the immediate occasion for the award of the Nobel Prize in literature to him. There is no pronounced change of technique, only a further accentuation of certain features already present in the two works which preceded, especially as regards the objectiveness of the presentation. The idiosyncracies of Hamsun are here less manifest than in any other production of the author. His irony and satire are not entirely absent, but are not directed against the central figure, which is treated with the greatest sympathy and admiration. Hamsun's point of view is, of course, that of the man of culture, wide knowledge, and keen intelligence; his intellect stands far above his theme, but his heart is entirely in it. The style, as is always the case with Hamsun, is admirably adapted to the theme.

Markens Grøde, with its strong, vivid, highly expressive prose, constitutes a monumental epic of the humble, but able, courageous, and untiring man who goes out into the wilderness and wrests a living from stern but bountiful nature, establishes a home for himself and his family, ever enlarges his domain by unceasing effort, and incidentally becomes prosperous and influential, solely by his own labors, a model for his fellows, the patriarch of a country-side, but who remains throughout the same humble and diligent toiler that he is in the beginning.

⁶⁹ *Verker*, X, p. 44.

⁷⁰ The translation of the title is inadequate. *Grøde* signifies here above all the products, the bountifulness of the soil. "The Bounty of the Soil," seems more appropriate.

There is no plot, the simple events portrayed are not embellished by any romantic features, and not even the main character is in the least idealized. Beauty and culture are conspicuous by their absence; here we find only strength, vitality, ability, and perseverance. No ideals are extolled except that of the simple life of the hero, and even this largely by implication. The sole purpose of life seems to be the exercise of those primitive faculties with which nature has endowed man and beast alike. *Markens Grøde* bears not the slightest resemblance to tales from our own frontier days. The American pioneer was a capitalist compared with Isac, the hero of Hamsun's novel. Alone and almost empty-handed, he makes his way into the wilderness, he has not even a dog for his companion. "The man comes along walking towards the north. He carries a bag, the first bag in these tracts, it contains victuals and a few tools. The man is strong and coarse, he has a red, wiry beard, and scars show in his face and on his hands—these disfigurements, do they tell of toil or fight? He has perhaps been just released from prison and wants to hide, maybe he is a philosopher and is seeking peace, but he is coming there, no matter why, a human being in this enormous solitude."⁷¹

And he knows what he wants, a place to establish a home for himself. There is room enough, pretty localities and fertile soil are not lacking. But Isac is not easily satisfied. Night comes and he has made no choice, and after a few hours of rest on the heather, he trudges on again. Not until the third morning, he chooses the site where he will drive stakes. It is a long day's journey to the nearest abode, still further to the village, but what of it? The conditions here are the most favorable to his undertaking, and that alone matters.

An overhanging rock suffices as shelter for the start. That being settled, Isac goes to work—and breaks ground. Not Isac!—Birch shingles he makes and carries them to the distant village, bringing back with him victuals, always more victuals, and a few tools and utensils. At last, he comes home with three goats. Isac is prospering. In the fall he erects a sod-hut which he shares with the goats. Things are getting cozy. But his earthly possessions already begin to cause him trouble; he cannot well leave his goats alone while he makes his trips to the town, but he manages somehow. Some roaming Laplanders discover the pioneer, he tells

⁷¹ *Verker*, XI, I, p. 5.

them of his troubles. He ought to have a woman to help him. They promise to advertise his need, but no one seems eager to share his prosperity and comfort. All winter long Isac and his goats have to get along as best they can. Isac keeps busy, now he carves wooden troughs for which he finds a ready market; with the proceeds he increases his supplies. He carries tons to and fro on his own back, as a bearer of burdens he can vie with any camel.

At last, one day in the spring, the longed-for help arrives, a strong, healthy, coarse-featured young woman of about thirty. Inger is her name. What prompts her to seek out Isac in the wilderness? Poor Inger is hare-lipped, that tells the tale. She does not come to stay with Isac, oh no! Inger is just accidentally passing by, but accepts Isac's invitation to step inside to rest up a little. The two have coffee together, which she has had the foresight to bring along, and Inger finally stays overnight. That they celebrate their nuptials then and there, Hamsun states in just a dozen words, comprising seventeen syllables in all. The occurrence in itself is not weighty enough to commit Inger, but she stays on and assists Isac in his toil. When the first child is about half a year old, they take it to church to have it baptized, that is important, and since the occasion is opportune, they are legally married. Inger insists on it. Perhaps she is right, Isac thinks; he perceives the need of the legal formality only very dimly.

Things go well; the family and their possessions grow so visibly as to arouse the envy of Oline, a distant relative of Inger, an elderly widow and a born scandalmonger with an astute scent for all sorts of secrets. Oline sends a Laplander with a rabbit in his sack to Inger when she is going with her third child, and he manages to expose the rabbit to her sight, seemingly inadvertently. Inger utters a groan and collapses on the threshold. The harm is done, no matter what medical science has to say about pre-natal impressions. The first two children are normal, the third is born with a hare-lip. Inger has always managed to be alone at the critical hour, just because she has been afraid that her children might inherit her own deformity. She is also alone on this occasion. Insane terror comes over her.

"And, O Lord, the worst of all, no mercy whatsoever, the child was a girl into the bargain.

"Isac was perhaps not half a mile away,⁷² it was scarcely an hour since he left the place. The child had been born and killed in the course of ten minutes."⁷³

Isac is very slow in such matters, his suspicions are easily allayed, and he remains in total ignorance of what has happened. Inger suffers no remorse, though certain facts—she, for instance, all of a sudden, teaches the older of her two boys to say an evening prayer—indicate that she feels the need of propitiating the Lord. All would be well, if it were not for Oline, who on her next visit quickly worms out the truth—and promptly advertises it. Malice is the only motive for her action. Isac has not a word of reproach, only pity for poor Inger. Things go on as usual, the agents of the law are slow in taking any action, they know well enough Inger is not going to run away. But Isac and his wife are apprehensive, and after some months the inevitable happens: Inger is haled into court, tried, and sentenced to eight years in prison. She does not have to serve the entire sentence by reason of some error on the part of the authorities and the intercession of a well-wisher of her and Isac, the former sheriff Geissler.

But even so she comes back changed much for the worse; she has, alas, become citified. Her deformity has been removed by an operation, she has learned dressmaking, has acquired manners; it would seem that the prison term has been a sort of education for her. Just so, Hamsun would say, and for this very reason she is now inferior, less suited for the mode of life she has again to lead. Sellanraa, this is the name which Geissler has bestowed upon Isac's place, is now too lonely and uncivilized for her; she, at times, is actually homesick for the prison. As she reaches the dangerous age, she forgets even her womanly virtue. She has preserved it hitherto for lack of temptation, which is now put into her path when some mines are started close by, and she promptly succumbs. Inger has her ups and downs, though in the end she recovers her balance.

"Because of her disfigured face, she was cheated out of the spring of life; later, she was placed into an artificial atmosphere for six years of her summer; since passion was still burning in her, the autumn of her life must needs produce some wild shoots.

⁷² The Norwegian mile is equivalent to about ⁵eleven English miles.

⁷³ *Verker*, XI, I, p. 67.

Inger was better than the blacksmith's women folk, a little damaged, a little perverted, but good and capable by nature."⁷⁴

Isac, on the other hand, steers a straight course. He possesses "the equanimity of the peasant, his simple emotional life, his stability, and slowness."⁷⁵

Inger's worst escapades he fails to notice and when on one occasion he surprises her in a compromising situation, he takes the matter philosophically. His mind is taken up with his work, he is always building something, but if some one asks him what he is driving at, he does not know yet himself. To wrest a statement from him requires great skill and patience. Isac never reads except on rare occasions in the almanac, for him there lies strength in the absence of book-learning. But his mind is alert, he is a keen observer where he is interested, and resourceful in meeting the problems and difficulties which he encounters. To his family he is kind and fair-minded, but he never displays his affections. The isolated location of Sellanraa serves as a protection against the temptation to depart from his accustomed frugality of life, even when he, through the sale of some mining interests on his place, comes into possession of a thousand dollars in one sum. The growth in his prosperity many times exceeds the increase in comforts which he accords himself. It is different with agricultural machines, here he is more progressive. While he is economical and frugal, he is not in the least niggardly.

Isac's prosperity does not impair his humility; he never forgets that his life is in the hands of Providence and calmly accepts what is meted out to him, trusting in the benevolence of the divine giver. As his children grow up, he builds a house for himself where he and Inger may live when he turns over Sellanraa to his son. But he wouldn't own up to his purpose, and we leave him still faithfully toiling at his post.

His children promise well, with the exception of Eleseus, his first-born. A stump of a colored pencil left by an engineer becomes his undoing. By means of it he can give expression to the artistic impulse in him, decorating the walls and the furniture for lack of paper, and when the engineer, on a later visit, happens to see his productions, he declares them to be indications of considerable talent and offers to take Eleseus into his office. Isac is strongly

⁷⁴ *Verker*, XI, II, p. 197.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, XI, I, p. 171 f.

against it, but Inger, who desires to see her children rise in the social scale, carries the day. So Eleseus comes to town and—his life is ruined. An attempt to put him on his feet by installing him as storekeeper disposes of the thousand dollars which Isac received for his mining property and which thus far have lain idle. To have brought this money into circulation again is the only thing for which Eleseus can be given credit. Having accomplished it, he is now ripe for America. He tries to keep up the illusion that he will succeed there and will return some day a self-made man.

“So Eleseus departs for America.

“He never came back.”

Sivert, the second son of Isac, is fortunately a chip of the old block. The place, the fields, and the country-side are his one and all. Like his father, he is thrifty, frugal, but not greedy, and a keen sense of humor, of which there is no trace to be found in Isac, brightens life for him considerably.

In the course of time, other settlers establish themselves about Sellanraa. One of them, Aksel Strøm, is treated rather in detail. His chief trouble is, as in the case of Isac, the lack of a woman to help him. He fares worse in this matter than Isac, unless we assume that all his trials and tribulations come before his marriage. Aksel succeeds in hiring Barbro, the daughter of a neighbor, but things do not go well. Barbro is not prompted to live on the outskirts of civilization by any physical defect, like Inger. On the contrary, she is a pretty young woman, but she, too, has come in contact with city life, has even worked as a servant girl in the great city of Bergen, and the injury that resulted to her character from her excursion into the world, is most serious.

Aksel and Barbro, as would be expected, live as though they were husband and wife, and the former is highly pleased when he discovers that the girl is with child. But not so Barbro herself. The child would be a fetter binding her to the place, as Aksel correctly calculates, and she has by this time become thoroughly wearied of the lonely life on Aksel's farm. And so she drowns the child without the least compunction. “Infanticide was for her without significance, nothing out of the ordinary, and this was simply the moral looseness and depravity which one might expect of a servant girl from the city. That became also manifest in the days following upon her deed, not an hour of seriousness, she was

the same artless, natural girl as before, unalterably taken up with insignificant foolery, full of the servant girl."⁷⁶

Aksel feels that she has wronged him, if she is responsible for what has happened. The moral side of the question is only of minor importance to him, and that he has lost a possible heir does not matter much, either; but she has broken the tie which should have bound her to the place, and thereby she has wronged Aksel personally. Barbro is shrewd enough to attribute the death of the child to an accident, Aksel is inclined to believe her and counsels that they report the occurrence and have the child properly buried. But Barbro will have none of it and ridicules the idea that the whole matter might leak out. In arguing about it, she becomes so heated that she gives herself away. She has born a child before and has killed it without being detected, and right in the city of Bergen, under the very eyes of the law, so to speak. Why should anything leak out here in the wilderness? Barbro has, however, reckoned without Oline, who soon manages to discover what has taken place.

Technically, this repetition is a weak point in spite of the variation of the accompanying circumstances. But Hamsun had special reasons for introducing it. Inger has served six years in prison; Barbro, whose motives were far lower, goes scot-free. Mrs. Heyerdahl, a great champion of woman's rights and an advocate of birth control, who only by a mishap came to have a child herself, knows Barbro, who began her career as servant girl in the house of the worthy lady. So Mrs. Heyerdahl comes to Barbro's rescue and pleads for her in open court with such eloquence that the state's attorney himself recommends acquittal. Barbro is made to appear as pure as a lily, all the guilt is attributed to Aksel, and if anyone is to be punished, it must be he. It takes the jury only five minutes to arrive at a verdict.

"No, the girl Barbro had not killed her child.

"Then the judge spoke a few words in his turn and declared that Barbro was acquitted.

"The people left the courtroom. The farce was over."⁷⁷

The trial is described at great length; the satire upon the modern woman and her influence upon life is, of course, patent.

⁷⁶ *Verker*, XI, II, p. 35.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 137.

To make sure that Barbro will not go astray a second time—it would be really the third time, but only Aksel knows of her first offence—Mrs. Heyerdahl takes her into her household again and keeps a vigilant eye on her. Unfortunately she needs more sleep, much more sleep, than Barbro, and so the latter takes turns with the cook in seeking pleasure and recreation in the small hours of night. The scheme works well, until Mrs. Heyerdahl one day spies a louse, imported from the excursion of the previous night into her immaculate home, which leads to the discovery of the clandestine outings of the girls. But this unexpected development is of little importance to Barbro, for whom a change of air has become imperative again. Since she shrinks from resorting to heroic means a third time, she sets all sails for the port of matrimony. She has to come to it, after all, and Aksel is willing and waiting. Barbro's hurry does not cause him any misgivings, and when he discovers her state, his chief concern is that she would be no help to him under the circumstances in the approaching harvest. When she assures him that she will work for two, he is satisfied; the paternity of the child is for him a matter of secondary importance. Not morals, conventions, and sentiments, but economic needs govern the lives of these people out on the frontier of civilization. And Hamsun has no fault to find with such a state of affairs.

"The man on the outskirts did not lose his head. He did not find the air unhealthful, he had public enough for his new clothes, diamonds he did not miss. Wine he knew from the wedding at Cana. The man on the outskirts did no worrying over the precious things he did not get: art, newspapers, luxuries, and politics were worth exactly what people wanted to pay for them, and no more. The proceeds of the soil, on the other hand, had to be secured at any cost whatsoever, they were the origin of all the rest, the only source of it. The life of this man barren and sad? No, least of all. He had his divine powers, his affections, and his magnificent superstitions."⁷⁸

"Great miracles were all about them all the time; in the winter, the starry heaven, in the winter also often the northern lights, a firmament full of blazing wings, a sea of fire in God's dwelling. Now and then, though not often, they heard thunder. It hap-

⁷⁸ *Verker*, XI, II, p. 160.

pened especially in the fall, it was mystic and solemn for men and beasts."⁷⁹

Geissler, the erstwhile sheriff of the district, a man somewhat of the Baardsen type, expresses Hamsun's own views when he declares that the state should not exact any tribute from Isac for the land which he wrested from the wilderness. Accordingly, he draws up a very arbitrary report, allotting to Isac ample ground and at the same time representing it in such unfavorable light that the latter has to pay but a mere pittance for it. Thirty-two thousand fellows like Isac is what the country needs. Since Geissler, more than twenty years later, still adheres to this figure, we may assume that it was arrived at from an estimate based upon the available area. Reference has already been made to the favorable report regarding agricultural possibilities in *Nordland* made by a commission in 1920. It must be remembered that Hamsun made his second, very emphatic report in *Markens Grøde* three years before that.

In view of the didactic purpose of the novel, the stern truthfulness of the author is the more remarkable. How much more he could have ingratiated himself with many readers, if he had suppressed some of the more primitive features in the lives of these outposts of civilization. But Hamsun cannot find any satisfaction in mere imagined greatness, beauty, and virtue and he paints Isac and the rest "wart and all." His hero is truly great enough despite his limitations.

"He is a pioneer, body and soul, and a tiller of the soil who knows no resting from his labors. A figure resurrected from the past which points out the future, a man from the dawn of agriculture, a man seizing land (*Landnamsmand*), nine hundred years old and now again the man of the hour."⁸⁰

Markens Grøde has already been published in an English translation. How the rank and file of English and American readers will receive this novel, remains to be seen. It is to be feared that even the most tolerant among them will put the book aside on having finished its perusal, thanking the Lord that they do not live in so barbarous and immoral a country as *Nordland*. Björnson's peasant stories undoubtedly make nicer reading. But . . .

⁷⁹ *Verker*, XI, I, p. 210.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, XI, II, p. 228.

XV

Hamsun's last work of fiction thus far published, *Konerne ved Vandposten* (The Women at the Town-Pump), 1920, would prove even less attractive to the American public, if the novel were already accessible in English. Let alone that the author gives here a freer rein to his irony and satire than almost anywhere else, the central theme in itself must seem offensive to all the more sensitive readers.

Oliver Andersen, a sailor boy and native of the little coast town where the action is laid, comes home from one of his trips one day with but one leg, and emasculated. The people, of course, are only aware of the outwardly visible injury which he has sustained. There is still much left of Oliver, and this rest is full of vitality, energy, and the desire to live. In the course of time, he degenerates more and more, acquiring by degrees all the traits commonly attributed to the eunuch. But he tenaciously holds on to life, ever making the most of the changing situations confronting him. His sweetheart, Petra, is at first uncertain about the course to take, but abandons Oliver for the cabinet-maker Mattis, only to return to the former when Mattis retracts because of a certain discovery. Oliver and Petra are married, and a number of children arrive. Oliver is satisfied, he is fairly sure of the paternity question. The chief man of the place, Consul C. A. Johnsen, and his son are responsible for Petra's offsprings, and Oliver knows well that any protest on his part would be useless. Only when a blue-eyed child crops out among all the brown-eyed ones, an aberration later on occurring a second time, does Oliver become jealous, for he suspects his former rival Mattis. And Oliver is not the only one who is displeased with the variation, Consul Johnsen, indeed, likes it just as little. Although Petra and Oliver are both blue-eyed, brown eyes, such as the consul's and his son's, have thus far been the rule. And that is as it should be. The explanation of the departure from the established norm is to be found in the fact that Petra has not been unyielding towards the attorney Fredriksen, for it is not easy for her to say the man nay who holds the mortgage on Oliver's humble home.

There are a great many rumors about Oliver's affairs, chiefly rehearsed by the women when they meet at the town-pump, hence the title of the novel. But their gossip does not constitute the most important part of the novel, though their views are pretty

close to those of the author. In spite of all the evil tongues that busy themselves with Oliver and Petra, there remains an element of doubt in the minds of the people, until Oliver himself unwittingly once for all dispels it. Fredriksen, who has been elected to the *storting*, wants to liquidate his affairs in the little coast town and, incidentally, to foreclose on Oliver. To counter him, the latter secures a declaration from the local physician, certifying to his disability. Fredriksen sees the point immediately when confronted by Oliver with this strange document and cancels the mortgage to forestall a scandal. The scheme works so well that Oliver tries it also on Consul C. A. Johnsen. Control has, however, slipped from the hands of the consul into those of his only son, who needs not be so careful of his personal reputation, much less of that of his father, as a member of the *storting*, and when Oliver comes to him, he bluntly turns him down. Not enough, he betrays the fact that Oliver carries on his person a certain certificate, and Oliver for a while becomes the laughing stock of the whole town. But even that troublesome spell passes over, and when Olaus, the chief tormentor of Oliver, is killed one night, as some barrels of fish oil behind which he has sought shelter become dislodged and roll upon him, Oliver enjoys unruffled peace once more. It looks as though he had contributed his share to attain this end; to be sure, we are not really told that he did anything to dislodge the barrels between which Olaus was taking his repose, but there are grounds for suspicion, though not in the eyes of the people, it seems. A factor contributing to the re-establishment of Oliver's reputation is the election of Frank, his oldest son, to the principalship of the high school of the town.

"At this moment no one came to Oliver and told him that he was a childless man. His children were a pure invention of his, to be sure, but he had them all the same; during their whole childhood and while they grew up, he had been something for them; he and they knew each other, they called him father among themselves and to others; now Frank came back to the town, having completed his education, as a great man. Petra and the grandmother had all the while wished to see him become a minister, oh, yes, but there was nothing to be done with that. Oliver said with pride: Such a son!"⁸¹

⁸¹ *Konerne ved Vandposten*, Kristiania og København, 1920, p. 540.

Comparing Oliver with Consul Johnsen and others who collapse when stricken by adversity, Hamsun says of him:

"Oliver was of tougher fibre, less refined, less sensitive, more careless, and therefore the right human material; he could endure life. Who had been trodden down more deeply by fate than he? But a little luck, a petty theft, a successful piece of trickery, made of him a satisfied man again. Was he standing holding palm leaves in his hands (i. e., had he become religious)? Oliver had been out in the world, he had seen palms grow, they were nothing to hold in one's hands."⁸²

Oliver's children do very well, though Frank, the oldest son, has his life spoiled by education, even if he because of it rises in the social scale. Hamsun stubbornly and consistently holds to his views in regard to intellectual knowledge and education. The following indicates his opinion of Frank's success:

"He had impregnated his mind with a large amount of difficult, linguistic knowledge, all by degrees, without coarseness or violence, simply by sacrificing time and vitality. Now he stood there on the deck, a little lean and yellow, without extent in any dimension, and, accordingly, excellently fitted for the profession of teaching. Upon the life about him he did not waste any more thought than it deserved, for his hands he had no use, the work of the sailors on board he watched with listless eyes, the machinists were terribly grimy. Frank could not stow barrels and boxes in the hold below, no, he was not made for that; but he could look up words in a dictionary, he was in possession of flimsy and sacred values in linguistics, no comparison was possible. Refinement is gained by diligence in school and is lost by manual work.

"No one has taught him to think, under the weight of his task he has simply pressed onward; it could not possibly be said that he had wasted his time and energy, he has reduced life to linguistic knowledge, and yet he does not consider himself cheated. Thus he goes on and on through his wilderness, a useless and foolish sojourn, not in order to get anywhere, but simply and solely to be one of them who travel through the wilderness. That is the task of his life."⁸³

⁸² *Konerne*, p. 534.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, pp. 340 and 395 f.

"Providence had meant him to be a philologist." There are few creatures on God's earth that to Hamsun seem more contemptible.

In Fia, the consul's daughter, we have a feminine parallel. With all things in her favor, she is contented to become a spinster, wasting her time on silly pursuits. Towards the close of the novel, she is characterized thus:

"She was well along in years, the bloom on her cheeks was no longer fresh, she was over-ripe, the young lady began to acquire a left-over look. She had passed all her years without succeeding, but also without making a failure of herself, nothing had been capable of changing her mind, she was inaccessible and bewitchingly sure of herself. That she had not gone astray, was due to the fact that she did not progress at all. What for should she move? She was prim and reserved. Her love and her maternal instinct had found an outlet in painting; she had all her life been in a position to afford this pastime; she did not paint from either outer or inner necessity, but she painted. No one ever saw her worried over herself, she committed no mistake, did no wrong, she was not wasteful, she was cultured of speech and refined in manners."⁸⁴ But she did not become a mother.

The postmaster, one of the characters whom the author makes his mouth-piece on several occasions, declares:

"It would be best, if we could extirpate this esteem of all these externalities, if all classes of people lost their superstitious faith in mechanical learning. It has been claimed that the clamor of discontent would cease if our knowledge were greater, and so they go on with still more fads and greater efficiency in those fads. And their heads proudly tower ever emptier and emptier, and no weighty thought burdens them. No, this is not the road which leads onward, even in the material sense it leads to the precipice. When my children were small, I took to reading over their school books—I must confess that I knew but few of the tricks expounded in them. Just give them more of this sort, don't be stingy in the matter, surfeit the young ones with such stuff, if you please, but the clamor will continue, the clamor will increase. A bowl of milk with the cream on, several of them, many of them, they are ours!

⁸⁴ *Konerne*, p. 488.

"Oh, the masses have learned their tricks, they can read their clamorous paper and so they obtain the store of ideas which they need. We workingmen. Does this mean the peasant and the fisherman? Is it not so? It means no one but the industrial laborer. It is he who clamors. Do you remember, Doctor, that you have witnessed the day when there were no industrial laborers in our country, but each home had its industry? And life was then not more hurried than to give us leisure for the observance of Sunday; it was not poorer in food, not richer in cares; the manner of life was simpler, contentment greater. Then mechanical inventions came to the fore, mass production began, the industrial laborer made his advent—for whose benefit or pleasure, I pray? For that of the manufacturer, of the employer, and of no one else. He wanted to make more money, he and his family were to benefit by greater material luxury, he did not think of it that he must die.

"No, listen here, said the Doctor with a smile, did he not give work to many people, did he not provide bread for hungry mouths?

"Bread? You mean the money with which to buy bread. He set people to work in factories—while the soil lies untilled. He enticed the young away from their natural places in life and exploited their energies for his own financial advantage. That is what he did. He created a fourth class in this world which already had too many classes, a whole class of industrial employees, the most superfluous laborers on earth. And we can see what a perversion of humanity such an industrial laborer becomes when he has learned the tricks of the upper class: he deserts the fishing boat, the fields, leaves home, parents, brothers and sisters, the domestic animals, the trees, the flowers, the sea, and God's lofty sky—instead of them he gets *Tivoli* (famous amusement place of Christiania), the lodge room, the saloon, bread, and the circus. For these values he chooses the life of the proletarian. Whereupon he shouts: we workingmen."⁸⁵

There are indications that Hamsun logically enough has come to regard modern commerce, which is impossible without the various industries, as exploitation, though he spoke so favorably of the country's commercial class in *Ny Jord*.

While the success of Frank, the philologist, does not appeal to him in the least, he does not stint with his praise for Abel, Oliver's second son, who is left to educate himself, thus learns the black-

⁸⁵ *Konerne*, pp. 190 and 256 f.

smith's trade and establishes a home for himself at an early age. Abel is the right stuff, and his kind, good-natured humor and tolerance accomplish what Frank with all his learning could never have done. Oliver has spent half a generation as the incumbent of a very humble sinecure which he is deprived of when the reins slip from the consul's hands. So he drops frequently in on Abel, begins with giving him a lift here and there, until he himself is well on the way to acquire the habit of work once more. Without Abel's help, Oliver would almost surely go to ruin.

Consul C. A. Johnsen has many traits in common with Ferdinand Mack, especially in his amorous pursuits. If he proceeds more warily than Mack, compelled by the difference in time and circumstances, he compensates for it by the great catholicity of his taste. With perfect impartiality he bestows his favors upon servant girls and the pretty wives of small businessmen. Mack's poise and culture, however, he does not possess, for he really had to begin himself at the bottom.

The lawyer Fredriksen belongs to the same type as his colleague Rasch, only that his nature seems much baser. In his matrimonial efforts he reminds one of the central figure in Ibsen's *De Unges Forbund* (The League of Youth), since he keeps two irons in the fire at the same time. And he is, indeed, a wise man, for when Fia, the unattainable, rejects him, he can fall back on his second choice.

Markens Grøde was written during the World War, *Konerne ved Vandposten* directly after it; both have for their background the immediate present. It is interesting to note that Hamsun has made no direct reference to the war in these works. We know his antipathy to England and the English people, and we find it has not changed. "In England justice always triumphs," he comments ironically on a miscarriage of justice in an English court, and through the mouth of the postmaster, he delivers the following invective, in which allusions to recent events are evident enough:

"I wonder if the English do not have a God of their own, an English God, just as they have their own monetary system? How can you explain it otherwise that they incessantly wage wars of conquest, and afterwards, if they have been victorious, think that they have accomplished a noble and high-minded task? They prevail upon all people to understand it thus, they thank their English God that they have succeeded in their misdeeds, they become religious over it. And now we furthermore discover

this remarkable trait in Englishmen that they presuppose other people also shall rejoice over their deeds; now the people must surely become good, they say, let justice now rule, turn to religion! To other people it may appear strange that the English don't blush with shame, they must surely have their own God whom they have pleased, and who has given them dispensation. They write in the press that now the moment has arrived, now mankind must become different, they make this their program: come now and let us turn to religion, they say, what else can we do? Ah, what a change there now will take place in mankind, everything must become different from what it was: there shall be different pictures on our walls, other books on our shelves, other sermons in the churches, we shall have a different sort of intercourse between the nations, different furniture, a different science, a different love, a different fear of God—in short, now we are going to have a different kind of buns. Why so? Because the English themselves have become different? The Englishman will never change. Because mankind all of a sudden has become different from what it formerly was? Mankind changes exceedingly slowly and by many, many re-incarnations.”⁸⁶

“Some impatient people want to take a hand in its guidance and bring about reforms, they plan a world totally different from our present, they devise programs, they do away with all defects. They don't do it from arrogance, they don't go about and crow over it, no, they proceed with entreaty and courtesy, they stand there and turn over the music sheets and whisper caressingly to mankind. But they do not play to the tune of humanity.”⁸⁷

In the second passage the author is speaking for himself directly. But while he is not pleased with some things as they are, there is no reason for pessimism, in his opinion. “Things go on just the same, all of them, and some go, indeed, well. What is best of all, we do not know. Rise and fall, I presume, is a part of the whole, it all belongs to human existence. A light is burning on a candlestick, the door opens and the light goes out. Who is to blame? Was there any one at fault?”⁸⁸

We have here an expression of the spirit of tolerance which Hamsun, in the final analysis, has for all, though his outlook upon

⁸⁶ *Konerne*, p. 361.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 552.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 553 f.

life and his temperament compel him to attack various forms under which the universal life manifests itself.

He has again portrayed a segment of it in *Konerne ved Vandposten*. Many figures are set forth, one might even ask if Oliver is the most important one, if it were not for the fact that, in a way, he is a symbol of the whole town.

"He is of the human stuff which endures. There he is limping homeward. He is somewhat the worse for wear, a little defective, but what is there that is perfect. The life in the town realizes its image in him, it crawls, but it is ever so busy for all that. It begins in the morning and lasts till night-fall, and then the people go to bed. And some lie down under a tarpaulin.

"Large and small things happen, a tooth out of the mouth, a man out of the ranks, a sparrow that drops dead to the ground."⁸⁸

XVI

The life-work of Knut Hamsun comprises three periods. The first extends to and includes *Munken Vendt*. This drama constitutes the culmination and summing up of all those tendencies which characterize the earlier part of the author's career. The typical hero of this group of works is the young man of thirty who is at odds with existence in general and with society and its standards and values in particular, and who violently rebels against existing conditions. There is a great deal of similarity in the psychological make-up and even in the external circumstances and experiences of these individuals. They are without home or definite place in society, the conventions and restrictions of which they disregard, chiefly because their lack of polish, resulting from social contact, makes adjustment impossible for them, although they try to persuade themselves and us that social intercourse is insincere and built upon sheer humbug and sham. A mania for complete independence is also common to them, the price they pay for it is isolation and failure. They are ardent and constant lovers, but not one of them wins the woman of his affections. The most precious factors in their emotional lives are the admirations and the longings which they cherish, and the memories which, with them, never fade. The inner life, not outward reality, is for this type of chief, in fact, of sole importance. But the outside world, nevertheless, exercises a very strong influence upon them. Being one

and all sensitive to a high degree of irritability, they respond violently to all outside impressions; the reaction is often wholly out of proportion to the external cause.

These young men are governed by impulses of a very irrational and compelling nature. The inhibitions of the normal individual do not exist for them, though regret frequently follows almost immediately upon their erratic conduct. It results from the fact that, in spite of all outward disdain, they cannot dispense with social contact. Since they are entirely governed by impulses, originating from the ever changing environmental influences, the permanent in their personalities, i. e., character, is often obscured to such a degree that it seems to be lacking. As a matter of fact, all the individuals of this type are really possessed of very strong will-power, which, however, is not directed to the attainment of those ends which are generally recognized as desirable. Because they neglect to strive for worldly success, sacrificing it for the sake of their independence, and, due to the great variety of external influences and impressions, behave in a very inconsistent and often contradictory manner, they appear weak and vacillating to the superficial observer.

They ignore all moral questions and acknowledge no moral obligations, but their lofty pride and self-respect protect them against debasement; they do not even allow themselves the same latitude which they accord to others, whose transgressions of various kinds they view with a great deal of indulgence. Their ideal is the intellectual and ethical aristocrat, the man who stands above all laws imposed by society upon its members, precisely because he is governed by superior insight and ethical principles far more exacting than those commonly subscribed to by the rest of mankind. This does, however, not preclude violations of accepted moral standards.

In its attitude towards humanity, this type is highly individualistic and anti-social. Indifference to, if not contempt for, all cultural values of the present age is characteristic of it. Real grandeur and genuine beauty and culture are not to be found in our times according to these iconoclasts. The ruling spirit of the age, that of democracy, is inimical to true culture, they hold, and the leaders of the masses are destitute of originality, nobility, and greatness. Democracy they regard with disgust, because of its real or supposed tendency to reduce all men to a common level, which,

of necessity, spells mediocrity. Hence the contempt of Hamsun's favorite type for the masses. There has been an intimate connection between the rise of democracy and industrialism. The organized industrial laborer is the chief exponent of democracy; this is the main reason for the unfavorable verdict pronounced upon our modern economic development; that it has physical and moral decline in its wake is another.

In their efforts to escape from the disconcerting turmoil of life, Hamsun's heroes seek to achieve the closest communion with nature in its more primitive state. Their love of nature, as well as their other characteristics, they share with the author, who has remained ever loyal to it, though his attitude towards it has undergone a certain change. All the earlier works of Hamsun are highly subjective and full of personal elements; Hamsun has depicted himself in them from many different angles. That is one of the reasons why he, almost without exception, chose a man for the central figure, though he has drawn a number of women characters in the first group of his works with great care and in detail. He is fond of two opposite types: one, proud, disdainful, and coquettish; the other, simple, naive, and self-effacing. His heroes are usually attracted by two women of such divergent character. The poems of Hamsun, which were published in collected form two years after *Munken Vendt*, belong in the very nature of the case to the first period, during which they originated. Although few in number, they cover a wide range of emotional experiences and indicate a progressive emancipation of the poet's own self from external influences that have caused him torment.

The productions of the next ten years, which may be said to constitute the second period, are of a somewhat heterogeneous character. A change in the attitude of the author towards life becomes manifest in *Sværmere*, which must be grouped with *Benoni* and *Rosa*. While not objective in the strict sense of the word, the personal elements have disappeared, no note of revolt is struck, and the lives of the main characters do not end in failures. *Under Høststjærnen* and *En Vanderer spiller med Sordin* belong together because of their contents; but in the former, the main theme is the hopeless infatuation of a man in his forties, in the latter, it is the tragic fate of Lovise Falkenberg. This is the only instance where Hamsun deals with the emotional experiences of a woman who has been married for years, in all other cases he

depicts only the spring time of love. To be sure, Adelheid Holmsen might be included here, but the author does, in this instance, barely touch the surface of things. An element common to the two novels mentioned above is the praise of the simple life led by the tillers of the soil. Nature is extolled as the great consoler as before, but treated more objectively. It exercises, however, the same mystic influence upon the author as previously.

Livet ivold deals with city life, and if we accept the musician Fredriksen's estimate of it, we need not wonder that Hamsun dislikes, if not detests it. There are some splendid passages in *Ny Jord* referring to the toilers of the city, which seemed to contain the promise of a more elaborate treatment of this subject by Hamsun, but probably because of his aversion to industrialism, which dominates to a large extent the lives of the humble and poor in the city, he has not made it the theme of any of his works. Only three of his novels and three plays have their settings in the city at all. Most of Hamsun's productions belong to the category of *Heimatkunst*.

In *Den siste Glæde* the personal element is once more of paramount importance. While the author calmly accepts his own lot, he cannot forbear to wield his cudgel against certain tendencies of the time which seem to him of a most harmful nature. The tone of regret over the decline of his powers so pronounced in this narrative certainly did not prepare the world for his achievements during the sixth decade of his life, which comprises the third and, in most respects, the greatest period of his activity.

The four great novels which he produced since 1912 have the feature in common that the personal element is not brought in directly. Although the pictures here presented are strongly tinged by the author's point of view and accompanied by copious comment, they afford a fair insight into the present-day life in *Nordland*; the same may be said of several works of the preceding period, they deal, however, with conditions of two generations ago.

We may well apply to these novels Zola's definition: "*Une oeuvre d'art est un coin de la nature vu à travers un tempérament.*" But the "temperament," i. e., the individuality of the author, the personal equation, is, in the case of Hamsun, a weighty factor, for which large allowances must be made.

Børn av Tiden presents the decline and fall of an aristocrat of the old school, who is submerged by the tide of progress; the

sequel shows the deterioration of a once so simple community under the influence of advancing industrialism, while in *Markens Grøde* the author extols the heroism of the pioneer. In these works there is a didactic purpose, but in *Konerne ved Vandposten*, Hamsun was contented to portray life as he sees it; although comment by the author is not lacking, the reader is called upon to formulate his own conclusions.

Knut Hamsun has dealt more than any other novelist with the people and the conditions in *Nordland*, for which he harbors a deep affection because of the comparative absence of civilization, the naïveté and simplicity of the people, and the plainness of their lives. In point of time, he limits himself almost wholly to the present and recent past. Only in *Munken Vendt* he dates the events earlier than the middle of the nineteenth century. *Dronning Tamara* does, of course, not figure here. His early tenets he has changed but little, only his attitude towards existing conditions has become more tolerant. The classes which he dislikes most are the intellectuals, authors and artists included—the emancipated woman and the bureaucracy really come also under this head—the old, backward peasant stock, and the very antipode of it, the industrial laborer. Why he should find fault with the peasant, who tenaciously clings to the old, time-honored mode of life, is not quite apparent, considering Hamsun's general attitude. But on the one hand, he hates stagnation, it is better that we should move, even if we are headed in the wrong direction; the fulness of life consists for him in the maximum of action. On the other hand, the peasant has really become infected by modern conditions and has lost many of his old virtues, while he firmly adheres to his old faults and vices, and "stagnation" is for Hamsun almost a synonym for "death."

His aversion to industrialism results from his anti-democratic spirit and the conviction that the industrial life impairs the stamina of the people. Democracy and industrialism are perhaps nowhere more highly developed than in England and the United States, and this fact accounts largely for Hamsun's antipathy against all things English or American. As in other matters, there has been no change in his views. He has not abandoned any of his convictions, and if to-day he stands on a pedestal, it is not because he has compromised or made any concessions. Intellectual and cultural pursuits seem to him worthless, in part, be-

cause the things striven for are in themselves without real value, in part, because the actual attainments are mediocre. Intellectualism is for him, moreover, inimical to the highest possible development of the individual. He derides it in spite of his admiration for culture and his longing for poetic beauty.

Since he claims that the past was far greater than the present is, it may seem strange that he never attempted the treatment of a great historical character. But this would have involved the absorption and utilization of a great deal of material already in existence and produced by others, a task which might well seem superfluous to him. His fertile imagination and the life about him afforded him more interesting and valuable themes, for in spite of his romanticism, Hamsun is intensely devoted to the realities of the present day.

He has produced a large number of highly original and interesting figures, but not a single great man or woman, for even Isac cannot be reckoned as great. Judged from the esthetic point of view, to be sure, he is of monumental proportions, and he strongly appeals to our sympathy in spite of the humble simplicity of his life.

Various critics maintain that Hamsun was greatly influenced, especially in regard to style, by a number of foreign authors. Dostojewsky, Mark Twain, and Bret Hart are the ones most frequently mentioned, but no exact investigation of this question has yet been made. There is one troublesome feature to be taken into account. The style of Hamsun constitutes in its perfection probably the greatest charm of his works, and it is always well attuned to the theme. And what a difference there is in the style, let us say, of *Pan* and *Victoria* as compared with that of *Markens Grøde* and *Konerne ved Vandposten*. The time element does not account for it, for it is almost as great in works that stand in close proximity to each other. There is, surely, a wide gap between the style of *Markens Grøde* and the novels which immediately preceded and followed this splendid prose epic.

Maurice Francis Egan writes in the August number of the *American-Scandinavian Review* for the year 1921: "It is regrettable that translations from Scandinavian literature or history are not so popularly read as they might be. This is because they lack what the average American demands in all his books—cheerfulness, a touch of humor, and a lesson which will teach him

to be more contented with life. The average American may not be deeply in love with life; he is not so materialistic as he is generally represented to be, and the frank materialism of the modern European novel, in spite of its rather visionary idealism, which is without humor or gaiety, does not appeal to him. He is not gay, in the Continental sense, but he wants to live humorously and cheerfully; and, being a worker, and finding work to be endured for its results rather than enjoyed for its pleasure, he prefers to forget it when it is done, but not recklessly or pessimistically. . . .

"Our taste is eclectic. *Shore Acres* and *Way Down East* appeal to us when Strindberg and Hauptmann and Ibsen rather bore us; but given any foreign novel or drama with intense human interest, which carries with it the triumph of a moral idea, and to a man we will read it with pleasure."

It is just this absence of "the triumph of a moral idea" which will stand most in the way of any popularity of Hamsun's works with the great majority of American readers. For him, morals are "the least human element in man," and he is more attracted by the sinner than by the saint, because of the seemingly larger store of energy and vitality usually manifested in the former. His views in regard to sexual questions would particularly offend American readers. It must, however, be remembered that Hamsun unconditionally condemns all frivolity, licentiousness, and perversity—not really on moral grounds, but because they result in racial deterioration. While he does not admit it, he, in the last analysis, finds morals essential to the good of the race. In his tolerance towards offences resulting from strong, healthy, and normal appetites, he goes, however, very far.

Hamsun's attitude towards Christianity is in itself even more objectionable, but it will give less offence, since it is not as manifest on every page of his works as his lack of morals. Radical utterances are virtually confined to *Sult*, where their force is lessened by the irresponsibility of the character in question, to *Munken Vendt*, and a number of the poems. The shafts aimed at Reverend L. Lassen, it should be remembered, are directed not at the minister of the Gospel, but at the official of the state. In Norway, the ministers of the Lutheran Church, which represents the official creed of the country, are at the same time servants of the state, and as such they possess considerable power and influence. Of

recent years, their authority has been curtailed somewhat, but it is still large, especially in the rural districts.

The clergy of the state church find themselves in the awkward position resulting from dual allegiance, and it is not at all surprising that with many of them the temporal affairs usurp the lion's share of their time and attention. The whole system has been criticised by some of the foremost authors of modern Norway. As usual, Hamsun presents only isolated facts and figures without really entering upon the problem. He has penetrated a little more deeply into it than ordinarily in his portrayal of the bureaucracy of the country, but here, too, the picture of the situation is far from complete.

In regard to this particular feature, the American reader must keep in mind the wide difference existing between American and Norwegian institutions. While Norway is a democratic country, the old bureaucracy which she has taken over from former times, is still strongly entrenched, though it is losing ground continually. The Norwegian state officials, who are appointed and not elected, are practically assured of permanent tenure of office, barring malfeasance. Even in cases of proven misconduct in office, it was, and to some extent still is, difficult to secure the punishment of the offender. Usually, the decision rested with the superior officials of a certain department, who were strongly influenced by personal considerations. Through perpetual inbreeding the entire officialdom of the country had, so to speak, become one large family. It formed a class by itself and presented a united front to the rest of the country's population. Things are changing, but only very gradually. All these features, Hamsun brings out merely incidentally; he has not presented the matter as a problem, and his wrath is provoked chiefly by the fact that the official class lays claim to being the leading exponents of true culture.

It has been charged against Hamsun that his ideas are not constructive. While perfectly true, this criticism is, in a manner, ill-advised. Hamsun makes no secret of it that in his opinion there are already too many "constructive ideas" in this world, why should he augment their number? His program is, moreover, so simple that it requires no elaborate constructive ideas. Work to the full extent of your capacity at some productive task, seeking your joy in its performance, perpetuate your kind, keep close to nature, regard life as a loan conferred upon you, as a boon

to which you have no claim whatsoever, bear its vicissitudes bravely and manfully, preserve at all hazards the dignity of your own soul, and meet death fearlessly in the conviction that it is a beneficent provision of nature, that is the whole gospel which he has tried to preach.

The return to a simpler mode of life, that of the tiller of the soil, seems to him the remedy for the present ills of humanity. But people will not and cannot follow the road which he points out. Only upheavals and catastrophes of inconceivable magnitude could bring about the conditions which Hamsun extols as the only sane and natural ones. If our economic system breaks down at some point or other, the people have no other alternative than annihilation or concerted effort to repair the damage. There are not many Isacs among us, and even if we were all able to follow his example, the share in the fertile lands of the globe that would fall to each one of us would be considerably smaller than the one allotted to Isac by his friend Geissler. Hamsun is himself very well aware of our physical inability to adapt ourselves to a more primitive mode of life. We cannot strip off, like a garment, the culture which we have acquired; it has become a part of our beings and seeped into our very fibres and, in his opinion, has made us unfit for life's battle. "Yes, my fellow neurasthenics," he confesses mournfully, "we are poor specimens of humanity, and for any sort of animalic existence, we are also unfit."⁸⁹

This is a truth from which we cannot escape; but it is an entirely different question, whether or not it is a sane policy to foster industrial and commercial expansion at the expense of agriculture, a question which in the long run is regulated automatically by the law of supply and demand. As long as there is sufficient food, clothing, and shelter for the millions of men and women employed in industrial pursuits, or in the task of transportation and distribution of the products, the growth of manufacturing and commerce will not cease.

But did Hamsun desire to point out the way to all the nations of the globe, or did he address his exhortations to the smaller circle of which he himself is a member? Hamsun's own fellow countrymen, more particularly the people of *Nordland*, and, in a general way, all the so-called backward nations, are in a much better

⁸⁹ *Verker*, VIII, *Under Høststjærnen*, p. 107.

position to follow his advice than the millions that populate the countries leading the world in industries. As has been stated before, much of Hamsun's art is *Heimatkunst*.

In the end, there is no cause for pessimism. As Hamsun says in his latest novel: "Things go on just the same, all of them and some of them, indeed, go well. What is best of all, we do not know." He has spoken many a harsh word and has fought obstinately for his ideas and convictions, but he is aware of the relativity of the truths which he proclaims. The following lines are characteristic of his attitude:

Hvad vet vi, o Børn, om Vei og Sti?
 Værer ydmyge, Børn!
 Jeg hørte imot mig inat en Sang,
 det var som en Syvstjærnes Sang paa sin Gang,
 —idag er den draget forbi.

Al Jorden er fuld av Nattens Sne,
 hvor er Veiene, Børn?
 Vi leter os frem efter bedste Skjøn,
 en lykkes ved Eder, en feiler med Bøn
 —saa underlig kan det ske.*

Perhaps Knut Hamsun is but 'a comet whirled from its orbit,' but a star of first magnitude, he surely is, and one which sheds floods of brilliant light.

*What know we, children, of way and path? / Be humble, O children! / I heard in the air last night a song, / Like a song of the Pleiades on their course it was / —Today it has died away.

The earth is covered with the snow of the night, / Children, where is the way? / We all grope onward as best we can, / One succeeds, swearing, with prayer, one fails / —So strange, indeed, it may go.

CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF KNUT HAMSON'S WORKS

Fra det moderne Amerikas Aandsliv, 1889. (Out of print).

Sult, 1890.

Mysterier. Roman, 1892.

Redaktør Lyng. Roman, 1893.

Ny Jord. Roman, 1893.

Pan. Af Løjtnant Thomas Glahns Papirer, 1894.

Ved Rikets Port. Forspil, 1895.

Livets Spil, 1896.

Siesta. Skitser, 1897.

Aftenrøde. Slutningsspil, 1898.

Victoria. En Kjerligheds Historie, 1898.

Munken Vendt. (Brigantinenes Saga I), 1902.

Dronning Tamara. Skuespil i 3 Akter, 1903.

I Æventyrland. Oplevet og drømt i Kaukasien, 1903.

Kratskog. Historier og Skitser, 1903.

Det vilde Kor. Digte, 1904.

Sværmere. Roman, 1904.

Stridende Liv. Skildringer fra Vesten og Østen, 1905.

Under Høststjærnen. En Vandrers Fortælling, 1906.

Benoni. Roman, 1908.

Rosa. Af Studenten Parelius' Papirer, 1908.

En Vandrers spiller med Sordin, 1909.

Livet ivold. Skuespil i 4 Akter, 1910.

Den siste Glæde. Skildringer, 1912.

Børn av Tiden. Roman, 1913.

Segelfoss By. I-II, 1915.

Markens Grøde. I-II, 1917.

Konerne ved Vandposten. I-II, 1920.

Samlede Verker. I-XI, 1918.

130'



INLAY IN THE PAVEMENT OF THE CATHEDRAL AT SIENA

1202

Smith College Studies in Modern Languages

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THE TRADITION OF THE GODDESS FORTUNA
IN ROMAN LITERATURE AND IN THE TRANSITIONAL PERIOD

BY

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NORTHAMPTON, MASS.
SMITH COLLEGE

PARIS
LIBRAIRIE E. CHAMPION

Published Quarterly by the
Departments of Modern Languages of Smith College

PRINTED AND BOUND BY
GEORGE SANTA PUBLISHING CO.
MANUFACTURING PUBLISHERS
MENASHA, WISCONSIN

130³

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PREFATORY NOTE

The frontispiece is taken from a photograph of the inlay, designed by Pinturicchio, in the pavement of the Cathedral at Siena. For this picture I am indebted to the kindness of Miss Lizette A. Fisher, who procured it for me in Rome. The combination of Roman and Medieval motifs makes it strikingly interesting and appropriate for this study. In the case of Fortuna herself, the ball, the cornucopia, the sail, and the prow, are Roman. The mountain, surrounded by the sea, and beset by many dangers for him who would climb it, is essentially Medieval.

HOWARD R. PATCH

Northampton, Massachusetts.

The Tradition of the Goddess Fortuna

IN ROMAN LITERATURE AND IN THE TRANSITIONAL PERIOD

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this essay is to study the nature and functions of the Goddess of Fortune in Roman literature and the literature of the transitional period.¹ The frequent appearance of this figure in documents of the Middle Ages is well-known, although, perhaps, not adequately appreciated. It is well-known, too, that the goddess existed in earlier days in Rome, and was actually worshipped as a prominent member of the pantheon. She is important, therefore, as a deity who was taken over after the transition from a polytheistic to a monotheistic religion, and her interest thus becomes twofold.

Traits of the goddess in Rome, which were reflected in the literature, would naturally survive in the literary treatment of later ages. This fact would suggest the possibility that some of the old religious feeling might be retained in the Christian period. Are the references to Fortuna in the Middle Ages simply ornamental and perfunctory, or has she inspired fresh imaginative endeavor? Does she appear in only one sort of literature: for example, as a lay figure in a Classical background? Or is she a vital element in every variety of plot? Where precisely does the change from religion to allegory occur, or indeed does it really occur at all?

And this brings up the question of allegory, which is, after all, only faded religion. The author of any kind of symbolical writing has something more in his conception than the mere outward signs, the painted surface of symbolism (or, as Dante calls it, the veil), however pleasing that may be aesthetically. The purpose of allegory is to reveal certain thoughts; and, in so doing,

¹ This paper is composed of a section of the Introduction and two chapters from my doctoral dissertation on *The Goddess Fortuna in Medieval Literature*, presented at Harvard University in 1915. Some slight alterations have been made in the present copy, but substantially the material is the same.

it employs terms which represent but do not necessarily reproduce the original ideas. The symbol need not actually imitate the idea, nor does it ordinarily replace it by a mere arbitrary formula. This type of art, accordingly, affords us pleasure that is quite distinct from that of the mere exercise of unriddling.² It gives us the meaning in the author's mind clearly and felicitously, in a manner which, at its best, may be more direct than that of pure imitation. The symbol, however, may closely approach its original, and on their proximity depends how literally we may read its meaning. If the ideas are "religious," we may be coming close to some knowledge of the author's religion. Allegory and religion are frequently intermingled, and what one man takes literally as a deity another takes as a "force." A religious symbol in the figure of a goddess, then, becomes actually a goddess when the concept in the symbol warms the features of its cold material embodiment into life. Fortune was once worshipped as a deity; does she retain this position in the Middle Ages? Or, if she has become temporarily a symbol, does she at any time revive?

Obviously these questions touch on a still larger problem, which arises from the peculiar nature of Fortuna. She is concerned not merely with one phase of human existence, as are most gods and goddesses,—Ceres, for example, with the harvest, and Neptune with the sea and its dangers,—but she gradually usurps all places until she approximates the dignity of a female Jove. She becomes the ruling power of the universe, although her government is without a plan. If at any time we find her suddenly steadied in subordination to some other deity, the change is significant for the philosophy of life in that period. In other words, the attitude of a period toward Fortuna reveals its attitude toward the question of fatalism. And thus the problem of Fortune is at once linked with the questions of fate and free-will; of the drama of fate; of sentimental and rationalistic art; and, if it is not too bold to put it that way, with the great crux, Classicism and Romanticism.

² Or, as one writer puts it, of "Crossing the debatable land between allegorical and literal, and establishing [oneself] securely and happily on the open ground of literal narrative": W. R. MacKenzie, *The English Moralities*, Boston and London, 1914, p. 258.

CHAPTER I

FORTUNA IN ROMAN LITERATURE AND THOUGHT

In Rome, close to the Tiber and on the right as one crosses the Ponte Palatino, stands a plain little Ionic temple, supported apparently with eighteen columns, and well preserved despite the ravages of many centuries. Since it was converted to its present use in 872 A. D., it has been called the Santa Maria Egiziaca. It is usually considered an old temple of the goddess Fortuna, worshipped here especially as the protecting deity of women.¹ Fortuna, who flourished in Rome in great power, often acquired special duties, and in the performance of these received appropriate cognomina,—Fortuna Virilis, Fortuna Barbata, Fortuna Respiciens, and the like.² But the cult of the goddess really embraced all of these. Minor evidence of the worship is found in plenty of images and plaques, and a treasury of coins. We have, in addition, the literary treatment and the inscriptions which mention her. As a deity, she was mother, nurse, provider, guardian, friend, and enemy, to the Roman, and the child of Jupiter himself.

The cult was strongest at the time of Rome's greatest vigor, when Rome like a great youth conscious of his physical endowments, but possessing too little self-control for the mastery of them, spread its conquests and discoveries over the world, sent ships as far as Britain, and held Greece in thrall. The great question

¹ See Roscher, 1510; Wissowa, *Real Encyc.*, 19 ff.; Middleton II, 189–90. Cf. Wissowa, *R. K.*, §40, p. 256; S. B. Platner, *The Topography and Monuments of Ancient Rome*, Boston, 1911, pp. 399 ff. Some scholars hold that Fors Fortuna was the forerunner of Fortuna. She first received the cognomen, which later broke off and became independent. For this complicated process, see Carter, *Religion of Numa*, p. 24: "And thus, just as in certain of the lower organisms a group of cells breaks off and sets up an individual organism of its own, so in old Roman religion some phase of a god's activity, expressed in an adjective, broke off with the adjective from its original stalk and set up for itself, turning its name from the dependent adjective form into the independent abstract noun." See Wissowa, *R. K.*, §10; Fowler, *Relig. Exper.*, pp. 153 ff.

² See R. Peter, Roscher 1511.

of the day concerning Caesar was, "What conquest brings he home?" With the riches of all countries in the cargo of Italian ships, came new religions by the score. The element of chance would naturally be felt to play a large part in life; and Rome was most susceptible to foreign suggestion, dabbling in new faiths and creeds, and reviving the old for hardly more than idle pleasure. Civilization was necessarily in a state of skepticism and transition. It had too much of the youth's universal wonder to be held by any well-knit, dogmatic belief. It was the time of the beginning of the Empire; and in this period Fortuna, born long before, really came into her own.

The goddess had at least twenty-eight different functions and cognomina.³ She was mixed most intimately and oddly with other gods.⁴ The history of Fortuna in Rome had an early beginning in the worship of the mythical Servius Tullius, who built at least two temples in her honor.⁵ At the time of the first Punic War, the consul Lutatius Cerco wanted to get advice from the oracle of the goddess at Praeneste, but Rome forbade.⁶ In 167 B. C. Prusias sacrificed at Praeneste to Fortuna Primigenia for the victory of the Roman people. By the time of the Empire there were at least eighteen temples and shrines to Fortuna in her different functions, and they were scattered all over the city.⁷

The religious condition of the city at the beginning of the Empire has often been treated. For present purposes the following authoritative statements will suffice. Wissowa says that for educated people the gods of the state religion had weakened to empty shadows;⁸ and Peter, that the Empire inclined to the syncretism of the divinities.⁹ Wissowa summarizes the situation thus: "Man wendet sich mit dem Gebete an eine ganz allgemein verschwommene, höchst unpersönlich gedachte Gottheit."¹⁰ This

³ Roscher, 1508 ff.

⁴ Roscher, 1530 ff.

⁵ Roscher, 1509. Cf. Wissowa, *R. K.*, p. 256.

⁶ Roscher, 1516; Wissowa, *R. K.*, p. 260.

⁷ See Roscher; and for full discussion, Daremberg-Saglio, 2^a, 1268 ff. For an interesting summary of the spread of Fortuna outside of Rome and even of Italy, see Roscher, 1548 ff. For a restoration of the temple at Palestrina by Canina, see: *The Life of the Greeks and Romans* by E. Guhl and W. Koner, N. Y., 1876, p. 327, fig. 347.

⁸ Wissowa, *R. K.*, pp. 83-4.

⁹ Roscher, 1530.

¹⁰ Wissowa, *R. K.*, p. 84.

is the background, and now let us turn to the *locus classicus* for the Fortuna of the Empire, Pliny: "Invenit tamen inter has utrasque sententias medium sibi ipsa mortalitas numen, quo minus etiam plana de deo coniectatio esset. toto quippe mundo et omnibus locis omnibusque horis omnium vocibus Fortuna sola invocatur ac nominatur, una accusatur, rea una agitur, una cogitatur, sola laudatur, sola arguitur et cum conviciis colitur, volubilis . . . que, a plerisque vero et caeca existimata, vaga, inconstans, incerta, varia, indignorumque faultrix. huic omnia expensa, huic feruntur accepta, et in tota ratione mortalium sola utramque paginam facit, adeoque obnoxiae sumus sortis, ut prorsus ipsa pro deo sit qua deus probatur incertus."¹¹

She was, then, a deity that ~~absorbed~~ ^{bannished} all the others. Later in studying the cults we shall see that she was the goddess of the state as well as of the individual; the goddess of the lower classes as well as of the higher; the goddess of women, and of the young men too. "The various classes of the population venerated their own goddess of Fortune."¹² There was the Fortuna of the different great families: Fortuna Flavia, Fortuna Juvenia, Fortuna Torquatiana, etc. And there was the Fortune of the particular individual: Fortuna Augusta; the Fortuna of Pompey; the Fortuna of Sejanus. "All these Fortunes are quite individual Schützgöttinnen, and fundamentally not different from the Tutela."¹³ Here indeed is a personal goddess.¹⁴ This, whatever

¹¹ Pliny, *N. H.*, 2, 22. "Among these discordant opinions mankind have discovered for themselves a kind of intermediate deity, by which our skepticism concerning God is still increased. For all over the world, in all places, and at all times, Fortune is the only god whom everyone invokes; she alone is spoken of, she alone is accused and is supposed to be guilty; she alone is in our thoughts; is praised and blamed and loaded with reproaches; wavering as she is, conceived by the generality of mankind to be blind, wandering, inconstant, uncertain, variable, and often favouring the unworthy. To her are referred all our losses and all our gains, and in casting up the accounts of mortals she alone balances the two pages of our sheet. We are so much in the power of chance, that change itself is considered as a God and the existence of God becomes doubtful." Trans. J. Bostock, and H. T. Riley, Bohn ed.

¹² Peter, Roscher, 1520. Cf. Wissowa, *Real-Encyc.*, 34.

¹³ Roscher, 1522. Wissowa, *Real-Encyc.*, 34: "Einzelne Personen verehren ihre eigene Fortuna, ganz ähnlich wie den Genius."

¹⁴ I differ here, obviously, from Axtell, who has studied the deification of abstractions in Rome. See Appendix A to this chapter.

preceded, is the state of things at the beginning of the Empire.¹⁵

As to the cult that developed during this flourishing period of the deity, it included one of those strange, almost automatic phenomena that spring up when religious development seems to be taken out of the hands of man. The cult of Fortuna-Panthea looks almost like an organism in itself. Fortuna appears, her own qualities strongly enough marked to identify her, and also provided with attributes from many other deities.¹⁶ One portrayal (on a lamp) shows her as a winged deity with a long tunic, her head covered with a helmet. She holds a cornucopia in her left hand, and with her right offers a bowl to a serpent near an altar at her feet. Around these figures, are arranged: the eagle of Jove; the dolphin of Neptune; the club of Hercules; the sistrum of Isis; the lyre of Apollo; the tongs of Vulcan; the caduceus of Mercury; and many more symbols.¹⁷

Fortuna has simply taken over the symbols of these gods as she has taken over their functions.¹⁸ This latter point we shall see in studying the divisions of the cult. The explanation which Jahn gives is as follows: "Bei der Häufung und Vermischung der verschiedenartigen Culte entstand ein leicht erklärliches Bedürfnis, die Kräfte der verschiedenen Gottheiten auf einen Punkt zu concentriren."¹⁹ Why was *this particular point* chosen for concentration? Fortuna must have been not only suitable, but also popular and full of vitality. Axtell sees this from a slightly different point of view: "We may also see the lack of strong individuality in the use of abstracts as cognomina of other gods, for in proportion as they become mere qualities transparent in their

¹⁵ A note as to the treatment in art: Peter (Roscher, 1503ff.) says: "Hauptsächlich aber sind aus der Kaiserzeit eine unübersehbare Menge von Fortunen bildern, welche die Göttin in der angegebenen Weise darstellen, in Marmorstatuen, Bronzen, auf Münzen, geschnittenen Steinen, Wandgemälden und sonstigen Bildwerken erhalten."

¹⁶ See Roscher, 1534 ff.

¹⁷ See description of Minervini: *Bulletino archeologico napolitano*, nuov. ser., 3, 1855, taf. 7, n. 1; p. 182. See for a seal of F. Panthea, H. Jordan, *Symbolae ad histor. relig. Italic.*, 1883, p. 13, which includes Venus, Cupid, Minerva, Harpocrates.

¹⁸ Roscher, 1536, "Der Sinn dieser Bilder ist offenbar, dass die Glücksgöttin die Macht aller Götter in sich vereinigt."

¹⁹ Jahn, 50.

name they lose their identity and are attached to other more clearly recognized deities to whom their qualities are suited."²⁰ This is to the advantage of Fortuna certainly. She was not a power with a single function, but a general ruler; and to this Fortuna Panthea, (under the name of πάντων Τύχη) Trajan built a Temple.²¹

Such, then, was the goddess to whom much devotion was offered throughout the time of Rome's greatest strength. To her the victor offered his sacrifice in gratitude for the victory. The poet sang her praises. The greatest emperors reared temples in her honor. And her appeal had in its scope not only the youth in the hope of full manhood, the maid desiring a husband, the husbandman praying for plentiful crops, the sailor waiting for a fair wind or invoking safe guidance into port, but also the devotees of Hercules, Isis, Apollo, Mercury, and many others. We may be sure that she was not merely a "fabulous" or "civil" deity,²² but that the good Roman at home, in lieu of our orthodox rapping on wood, found it advisable to scatter a little incense at her shrine before a venture.

I.

We may now reasonably inquire who was this goddess? where did she come from? was her ancestry respectable, and who were her forebears? how did she get power enough to gain so firm a hold on the religious life of the city?

First, note that she is not one of the *di indigetes*. Although this is true, she resembles them at least in one respect,—in that she does not possess a legendary or poetic biography like that of the Greek deities who flourish in Ovid. The Roman poets do not seem to create their gods or develop those already created, but rather to reflect them as they are already imagined in the thought of the time.

The vigor of the growth of Fortuna, however, is more remarkable than that of the *di indigetes*. They were all deities of special-

²⁰ Axtell, pp. 94 ff.

²¹ Roscher, 1536 (who refers to *Lyd. de mens.* 4, 7; and Preller, *R. M.* ³ 2, 188); and see Gaidoz, 59 ff.

²² Cf. St. Augustine on the discussion in Varro, *De Civ. Dei.*, vii, 3 (Migne, *Pat. Lat.*, St. Aug. XLI, 196).

ized activity, concerned with the practical affairs of Roman life, such as the hearth, the doorway, the cupboard, and the plow; Fortuna, on the other hand, is a goddess born from an abstraction concerned with no particular function of daily life. This fact is the more striking if, as some believe, early Roman thought was not inclined to generalizations of this kind;²³ and especially when we consider that Greek conceptions were not borrowed until the Second Punic War.²⁴ The question arises, what force or what need brought Fortuna into being in Rome between the time of the early religion and the time of Greek influence?

The problem of the birth of Fortuna falls really into two parts: (1) the origin of Fortuna as the Romans regarded her in general; (2) the origin of Fortuna, the goddess of pure chance. We shall see later that she had assumed the second form at the beginning of the Empire. Now we must consider how this came about; whether she was always the goddess of chance; and if not, what she was before.

The question of what Fortuna was in her earliest form, I cannot discuss in much detail here, except to remark that various types of evidence point to her origin as a moon-goddess; a sun-goddess; a close relative of Isis; a transformation of the Etruscan Nortia; a goddess of horticulture; of women; of childbirth; a protecting and cherishing goddess. Any or several of these conceptions may have stood behind the term in the early days.²⁵ Etymology leaves us with the idea that originally Fortune merely bestowed,—

²³ Axtell, Wissowa, Fowler, all seem to disbelieve in any great use of abstractions in early Roman religion. See Wissowa, *R. K.*, p. 23; Mommsen, vol. I, p. 211. Axtell, p. 62, says that he is inclined to take a middle ground; but in his summary he allows few of the later abstractions any personality. See Fowler, *Relig. Exper.*, p. 154; cf. Carter, *Relig. of Numa*, p. 24.

²⁴ Wissowa, *R. K.*, pp. 47 ff. Cf. Aust, p. 54: before the time of the Second Punic War, "Die natürlichen Vorstellungsgebilde des geistig tiefstehenden Menschen, der nicht bloß die einzelnen Erscheinungen und Thätigkeiten, sondern auch ihre einzelnen Teile in die göttliche Sphäre erhebt, sind wahrscheinlich schon durch die Sakrale Gesetzgebung des Numa in die Staatsreligion übergegangen, haben aber in den ersten Jahrhunderten der Republic durch die Pontifices eine künstliche Erweiterung erfahren." Cf. Fowler, *Relig. Exper.*, pp. 229 ff.

²⁵ For fuller discussion see Appendix C to this chapter.

bestowed anything.²⁶ Whether she bestowed idly or capriciously, or with a clearly marked scheme, is a later question.²⁷

But what brought about the introduction of the idea of chance and fickleness into Roman thought? Two answers seem possible. One is that Fortuna is borrowed from a foreign religion. Rome borrowed many gods, merely because the more favorable gods a nation has, the safer, of course, is its position. Fowler tells us that "The temple foundations of this period . . . show that there was a certain tendency to bring in deities from outside, not so much because they represented some special need of the Romans, corn or art or industry, as two centuries earlier, but simply because they were deities of the conquered whom it might be prudent to adopt."²⁸ The difficulty with this explanation is that while it might fully account for the case of many a half-hearted adoption of god or goddess, it does not explain the remarkable hospitality with which the Romans received and cherished Fortuna. The Roman temperament must have been fitted to receive her; the house must have been more or less ready before the guest came.

Carter hardly overcomes this difficulty when he suggests, plausibly enough, that the early Fortuna was "Goddess of plenty and fertility, among mankind as a protectress of women and of childbirth,"²⁹ and that Greek influence made the concept of luck prevail. It is his opinion that the old goddess was *Fors*, with *fortuna* added as a cognomen which broke off and became independent. But

²⁶ *Bhar; "she who brings," after the word became feminine. Corssen, *Krit. Beitr. zur lat. Formenlehre*, 1863, 194; Curtius, *Griech. Etym.*, 1879, 299 ff. See for a study of the cognomina (which seem to reveal little) Carter, *Amer. Philol. Assoc. trans.*, 1900, XXXI, pp. 60 ff.; *De Deor. Rom.* pp. 29 ff.

²⁷ Corssen naturally cannot touch on the question of implied fate or implied chance and haphazard luck. Axtell conjectures (p. 9) "most probably she [F.] was a beneficent power of good luck in the earliest stage." Cf. Wissowa, *Real-Encyc.*, 12. Corssen, 194 ff., says: "So steht jedenfalls so viel fest, dass fors und fortuna niemals 'Freude' oder 'Glück', sondern immer nur 'Zufall' bedeutet haben, 'Glückszufall' wie 'Unglückszufall'."

²⁸ *Relig. Exper.*, p. 284. Cf. Aust, 55, who says that in a siege the Romans prayed the tutelary gods of foreign cities to leave those cities and come to Rome.

²⁹ *Relig. of Numa*, p. 51.

here again, the Romans must have been temperamentally ready for such a development, external influence effecting it or not.³⁰

We need not be particularly concerned here with determining when this change came about, but we must note that it certainly occurred before the Empire. It seems fair to believe that the new conception had its source quite as much in the change of the Roman temper, when it gathered together its new powers, as in any influx of Greek philosophy. Aust held, "Dass unter den zahllosen, durch Weihinschriften bekannten Beinamen eines Juppiter, Mars, Hercules, einer Juno, Dian*, Fortuna zumeist orientalische und barbarische Lokal- und Landesgötter sich verbergen."³¹ We might supplement this by saying that under the numerous foreign gods which came to Rome, are hidden certain *di indigetes* of which we know nothing, or certain early Roman conceptions not quite apotheosized. It is often forgotten, when scholars observe that the early Christian Church borrowed much that is Oriental in symbolism and in sacrament, that these borrowings are only a necessary response to an inherently Christian need, and to a desire not at all Oriental.

The explanation that I am offering here would require simply that Fortuna found a place in Rome because the Romans already had an idea equivalent to this personification, or in some measure related. The Greek *Tύχη* can tell us nothing except as an interesting parallel development; Rome had to create its own goddess of chance, and it had to accomplish this process by altering its conception of the bestowing force. A man's attitude toward the bestowing force depends on the kind of life he is living. The life that causes a strong belief in the element of chance may be of two kinds:—A man may feel himself too weak to cope with the external powers, and may consequently believe that he is in the control of an outer destiny. On the other hand, he may be so physically vigorous that he launches forth boldly into the unknown, and then the vast unconquerable spaces of that region impress themselves upon him. Under these circumstances, again, he feels himself at the mercy of the outer forces. He is less inclined

³⁰ Note that, according to Carter, *Tύχη* in Greece originally fulfilled the will of Zeus: *Relig. of Numa*, p. 50. It was a later development that brought in the idea of chance.

³¹ Aust, p. 105.

to trust his own wits, or to believe in free-will; he is more likely to speak of chance. The latter we can conjecture would be the Roman attitude toward "the bestower" during Rome's changes of philosophy, during its great expeditions into the unknown, and during its fluctuation of creed and life. This attitude would determine the meaning of the word "Fortuna" and give birth to our goddess of Fortune.

This speculation gives at least a reasonable answer to the question of sex. Even if the old Roman religion did not conceive of their gods in couples, as some scholars have maintained,³² a conception of a feminine "bestower" might arise from the early conceptions covered by the term, because every one of these naturally implied the creative power, the idea of femininity.³³ The fundamental idea of "Fortuna" is the bestower,³⁴ the connotation is that of the creative goddess. May we not suspect also that other feminine qualities were present in the idea at a fairly early period? At least it was easy to include such qualities as mobility, inconstancy, capriciousness; in fact, this was the next step for the Roman to take, no matter what happened in Greek thought.

II.

Thus far we have considered the conflict of theories about the birth and development of Fortuna. That she was the goddess of chance at the time of the early Empire, all the authorities happily agree. "Fortuna, as her name implies," says Peter, "is the goddess of chance . . . She implies also a divinity of fate. But

³² Cf., however, Wissowa, *R. K.*, 22 ff.; Fowler, *Relig. Exper.*, 148 ff.

³³ See the separate goddesses representing these conceptions: Luna, Flora, Pomona, Ceres, Lucina, etc. The only difficulty is with the sun-god who in southern climes is nearly always masculine. In northern countries we have *die Sonne*. Gaidoz has trouble with this problem, but finds an original explanation to satisfy him (p. 57). I do not attempt to solve this; one can suggest the influence of the northern Nortia here, or the fact that the majority of the number are feminine. At any rate the strongest part of the idea is the creative, *das Ewig-Weibliche*. Fowler's note (p. 154) that "abstract qualities . . . are usually feminine in Latin" seems to me to solve nothing. For the creative in Fortuna see the later cults: Fortuna Virilis, F. Muliebris, F. of Antium (with right breast exposed). See appendix C to this chapter.

³⁴ Cf. *Introduction to the History of Religions*, C. H. Toy, Boston, 1913, §702, "The mass of evidence determining life by the will of the gods." This is the pure abstraction,—our "fortune."

while Fate is the personification of the inflexible and unchanging destiny, Fortune is a divine creature, 'who now with a favorable, now with an unfavorable disposition, appears as the source of all the unexpected and unaccountable.'³⁵ The statement of Otto is as follows: "Als Göttin vertritt Fortuna ursprünglich keineswegs den reinen Zufall, ebensowenig, wie Τύχη"; but he adds that later times believed principally in blind chance in opposition to divine providence.³⁶ Hild puts it in about the same way: Fortune is the "personification of the capricious and changeable influence, sometimes gloomy, sometimes favorable, which is seen in the life of individuals and of nations, and which without the appearance of any rule, whether of logic or morality, bestows success or inflicts its opposite. She is distinguished from Fate in that Fate is the expression of a law which reason admits without always explaining it; Tychè-Fortuna represents above all the derogations from that law, the unforeseen in human existence—full of incoherence and even of injustice—which can defy all reason and repel the moral sense."³⁷

Let us now turn our study to the literary treatment. In this field what seems to be the attitude toward the goddess of fortune? What is the relation of Fortune to Jupiter? to the Fates?

Before entering into this question, it will be well to remember that, as I have said above, many scholars believe that Fortuna originally stood for a goddess of fate.³⁸ There are many inscrip-

³⁵ Roscher, 1503 ff., quoting Preller, *Rom. Myth.* II., p. 179. Preller's full statement is as follows: "Schicksal und Glück sind eigentlich verschiedene Begriffe; auch deutet Manches darauf, dass man sich in Italien dieses Unterschiedes wohl bewusst war. Dennoch musste für gewöhnliche die Anbetung der Fors oder Fortuna sowohl dem einen als dem andern Bedürfnisse des menschlichen Gemüthes entsprechen, ausser und neben den eigentlichen Cultusgöttern eine dämonische Macht von unbestimmter, ja unendlicher Tragweite zu verehren," etc.

³⁶ Wissowa, *Real-Encyc.*, 13. Cf. Wissowa, *R. K.*, p. 261. Cf. Fowler, *Roman Ideas of Deity*, pp. 61 ff., especially pp. 78, 80; *Relig. Exper.*, p. 245, n. 30.

³⁷ Dar.-Saglio, 2^e, 1264; Cf. Hartung, p. 233; Carter, *Relig. of Numa*, pp. 50-51; in relation to the study of Τύχη, see Cumont, p. 179. For discuss. of Fatum see Roscher, 1446 ff.; Wissowa, *Real Encyc.* XII, 2047. Cf. an old statement by Gaidoz, "La Fortune devient alors la divinité de la Destinée par excellence," and the discussion of St. Augustine, Gaidoz, pp. 56, 58 (1886).

³⁸ See Otto, quoted above. See Roscher on the cult of Praeneste, 1541; Canter, pp. 64 ff. Cf. W. W. Fowler, *Relig. Exper.*, p. 245, n. 30.

tions to prove that she was accepted as the first-born of Jupiter³⁹ and in another legend she suckles him. She was included in a group with Jupiter and Juno;⁴⁰ and in many ways she showed herself not at all independent, or self-sufficient, but clearly associated with another and sometimes greater ruling power.

Let us begin a little before the time of the Empire:

I. Sallust (*Cat.* 8):

Sed profecto Fortuna in omni re dominatur; ea res cunctas ex lubricitate magis quam ex vero celebrat obscuratur.⁴¹

II. Cicero (*de Nat. Deor.* iii, 61):

Quo in genere vel maxime est fortuna numeranda, quam nemo ab inconstantia et temeritate sejunct, quae digna certe non sunt deo.⁴²

(*De Divin.* ii, 7)

Nihil enim est tam contrarium rationi et constantiae, quam fortuna, ut mihi ne in deum quidem cadere videatur, ut sciat, quid casu et fortuito futurum sit.⁴³

III. Horace (*Carm.* III, XXIX, 49):

Fortuna saevo laeta negotio, et
ludum insolentem ludere pertinax
transmutat incertos honores,
nunc mihi, nunc alii benigna.⁴⁴

IV. Ovid has an abundance of references to Fortuna.⁴⁵ Of these the following are the best known and most often quoted in the Middle Ages:

³⁹ Note the cult of Fortuna Primigenia. See Roscher, pp. 1541 ff.; Wissowa, *R. K.*, pp. 259 ff.

⁴⁰ Roscher, 1543 ff.

⁴¹ "But assuredly F. holdeth sway in every affair; she giveth fame or oblivion to all things more at her whim than according to their true desert."

⁴² "Of this kind I may particularly mention F., which is allowed to be ever inseparable from inconstancy and temerity, which are certainly qualities unworthy of a divine being." Trans. C. D. Yonge, Bohn ed.

⁴³ "For nothing is so opposite to regularity and reason as this same F., so that it seems to me that God himself cannot foreknow absolutely those things which are to happen by chance and fortune." Trans. Yonge.

⁴⁴ "F., who joys in her cruel business, nor ever tires of her tyrannous sport, shifts from one to another her fickle honours, now bounteous to me, now to some one else." Trans. Wickham.

⁴⁵ Perhaps Ovid's philosophy was revealed in the lines (*Ex Ponto*, III, 49-50):

Ludit in humanis divina potentia rebus,
Et certam praesens vix habet hora fidem.

(*Tristia*, V, *Eleg.* VIII, 15-18)

Passibus ambiguis Fortuna volubilis errat
et manet in nullo certa tenaxque loco:
sed modo laeta venit; vultus modo sumit acerbos;
et tantum constans in levitate sua est.⁴⁶

(*Ex Ponto*, Lib. IV, Ep. III, 29-36)

Quid facis, ah demens? cur si Fortuna recedat,
naufragio lacrimas eripis ipse tuo?
haec dea non stabili, quam sit levis, orbe fatetur,
quem summum dubio sub pede semper habet.
quolibet est folio, quavis incertior aura:
par illi levitas, improbe, sola tua est
omnia sunt hominum tenui pendencia filo.⁴⁷

V. Seneca (*Phaedrus*, 978 ff.):

(Chorus) Res humanas ordine nullo
Fortuna regit spargitque manu
munera caeca, peiora fovens;
vincit sanctos dira libido,
fraus sublimi regnat in aula.⁴⁸

These passages serve to show that the literary Fortuna was a goddess of pure caprice. In Art, too, she seems to show little stability or constancy. Her common symbolic attributes in Roman Art were: (1) the horn of plenty; (2) the rudder; and (3)

⁴⁶ "Fleeting F. wanders with doubting steps, and remains in no one place for certain, and to be relied upon. At one moment, she abides *in a place* full of joy; at another, she assumes an austere countenance; and only in her *very* fickleness is she constant." Trans. H. T. Riley.

⁴⁷ "What art thou doing, madman? Why art thou withdrawing tears from thy own wreck, supposing that Fortune should abandon thee? That Goddess confesses how changeable she is on her unsteady wheel, which she ever keeps on its edge, under her wavering foot; she is more fleeting than a leaf or than any breeze. Thy fickleness, thou faithless one, is alone equal to her. All that belongs to man is pendent from a single thread." *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ "Chance without order does command
Th' affairs of men; and with blind hand
Her ill-placed bounties does dispence,
Whilst lust triumphs o'er Innocence.
Fraud does in courts of princes reign."

Trans. Sir E. Sherburne.

the ball or the wheel.⁴⁹ Other less important symbols are: (1) the measure of fruit; (2) ears of corn; (3) prow of a ship; (4) wings; and (5) the libation bowl.⁵⁰ There is symbolic significance in her position—standing or sitting. “The sitting Fortuna is evidently not so mobile, so transitory, so fleeting a creature, but is considered as a Fortune who has paused for a longer stay.”⁵¹

On the symbols I have mentioned, there is this comment to be made. Each is a symbol of some quality. Not like the owl of Minerva, the symbol of place (*i. e.* the Parthenon); but like the wings on the feet of Mercury, or the caduceus, the symbol of some characteristic which identifies the divinity. The rudder symbolizes the guide of life; the ball, the wings, the standing position, are symbolic of the transitoriness of fortune.

I dwell thus long on the evidence that Fortuna was considered arbitrary and whimsical, because there are instances where she is mixed up with the Fates or identified with them, and where it is implied that her work is of the same character as theirs. I wish to indicate that during the Empire this confusion means merely that the Fates had in general become haphazard; that the element of chance was thrust in everywhere. Destiny's plan seemed not so enduring as heretofore. This same confusion occurs in the Middle Ages, and there we must study the Medieval point of view which is to make either the Fates capricious or Fortuna constant.

In Rome, a typical example of the confusion is the following: Juvenal (7, 194 ff.):

Distat enim quae
sidera te excipiant modo primos incipientem
edere vagitus et adhuc a matre rubentem.
si Fortuna volet, fies de rhetore consul;
si volet haec eadem, fiet de consule rhetor.

⁴⁹ Roscher, 1505: “Diese drei Attribute sind so ausschliesslich zu Symbolen der Glücksgöttin geworden, dass sie für sich allein die stelle des Bildes der Göttin vertreten.” The wheel is reserved for discussion in another paper, but see Kirby F. Smith, *Tibullus*, N. Y., 1913, p. 306, n. 70; Canter, p. 77.

⁵⁰ See for the list, Roscher 1504 ff. Besides these, of course, are the many attributes of Isis-Fortuna and Fortuna-Panthea, Roscher 1530, 1534; 1549 ff.

⁵¹ Roscher, 1505, where Peter compares the significance in the attitudes of Vulcan.

Ventidius quid enim? quid Tullius? anne aliud quam
sidus et occulti miranda potentia fati?
servis regna dabunt, captivis fata triumphum.⁵²

Here the fates calmly take over the function of Fortuna, and it is clear that Juvenal attributes no preconceived and eternal plan to their universe.⁵³

Roman philosophy distinguished, however, between fortune and fate. That it did so is not an indication, necessarily, that the popular mind did the same; but the distinction will serve as a basis for our analysis:

I. Cicero (*de Fato*, iii):

Quaero igitur, (atque hoc late patebit) si fati omnino nullum nomen, nulla natura, nulla vis esset; et forte, temere, casu, aut pleraque fierent, aut omnia; num aliter, an nunc eveniunt, evenirent? Quid ergo attinet inculcare fatum, cum sine fato ratio omnium rerum ad naturam fortunamve referatur?⁵⁴

Here, without the intention of distinction, is a clear contrast between fate and fortune on the ground that the latter is the ruler of chance.⁵⁵ I shall add Plutarch, who, although he wrote in

⁵² "It makes a difference what stars receive thee when thou beginnest thy first wailings, when thou art still rosy from thy mother. If Fortuna wills, from a rhetorician thou shalt become a consul; by the same token if she wills, the consul will become a rhetorician. What of the case of Ventidius? what of Tullius? anything there but the stars, the wondrous power of secret destiny?—The fates will give kingdoms to slaves, to captive men the triumphal procession."

⁵³ There is a nice problem in the interpretation of the Horatian line:

Te semper antit serva Necessitas,

(*Carm.*, I, XXXV). In my opinion it should be studied in connection with Dante's similar passage (*Inf.* VII, 89):

Necessità la fa esser veloce.

Cf. D'Alton, pp. 112, 228. In Virgil, on the other hand, Fortune seems to become steadied in a reminiscence of her older meaning, and Fate is dominant. Cf. *Aeneid* V, ll. 709; ll. 604. See Fowler, *Roman Ideas of Deity*, p. 77.

⁵⁴ "I ask then—and this principle is capable of extensive application—if there were absolutely no such name, no such nature, and no such influence as that of Fate, and if, as a general rule, the majority of events or every event, happened at random and by chance, would they happen otherwise than they do? Why then should we always resort to Fate, when without any such principle the cause of every event may be fairly referred to nature, or to Fortune?" Trans. Yonge.

⁵⁵ And cf. Pliny, p. 135 above.

Greek and introduces the influence of Aristotle, represents phases of the thought of Roman civilization under the Empire:

(*De Fato* 7):

Τὸ μέντοι [αἰτίων] κατὰ συμβεβηκός, ὅταν μὴ μόνον ἐν τοῖς ἕνεκά του γίγνηται, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν οἷς ἡ προαίρεσις, τότε δὴ καὶ τὸ ἀπὸ τύχης προσ-αγορεύεται.⁵⁶

(*De Fat.* 5):

Μόνα δ' εἰμαρμένα καὶ καθ' εἰμαρμένην τὰ ἀκόλουθα τοῖς ἐν τῇ θείᾳ διατάξει προηγησαμένους.⁵⁷

(*De Fat.* 7):

Διὸ καὶ τὸ μὲν αὐτόματον κοινὸν ἐμψύχων τε καὶ ἀψύχων· ἡ δὲ τύχη ἀνθρώπου ἴδιον ἥδη πράττειν δυναμένου.⁵⁸

In this distinction between Fortune, Fate, and chance, we have a new problem introduced, the question of free-will. I shall touch on that problem elsewhere. For the present, it suffices to show that the Fates have a predetermined plan and Fortune is purely capricious.⁵⁹ The capricious goddess, then, is what we shall mean by the "pagan Fortuna." She is in control of the universe, but she is quite arbitrary about it.

In this study of the meaning and philosophy of Fortune, the question arises what is the remedy for such a controlling force in the universe? One must necessarily suffer from a turn of the tide. What can we do about it? The good pagan could only answer: "Bear it; wait for still another reversal." This, carried a little further, became the advice to oppose your strength to that of

⁵⁶ "Now the cause by accident, when it is found in a thing which not merely is done for some end but has in it free will and election, is then called Fortune." Trans. "A. G."; ed. Goodwin. Plutarch's *Morals*. This is Aristotelian. The influence of Aristotelian philosophy on Medieval discussions of Fortuna will be treated in another paper.

⁵⁷ "In like manner, those things only are fatal and according to Fate, which are the consequences of causes preceding in the divine disposition." *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ "Wherefore chance is common to things inanimate, as well as to those which are animated; whereas Fortune is proper to man only, who has his actions voluntary." *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ One can parallel the methods of divination with this. Astrology and the predictions of soothsayers are ways of getting in touch with the great scheme of the universe, methods of discovering the plan; lots, geomancy, fortune-telling in general, aim to fit haphazard media to a haphazard order. See Pliny, *N. H.*, 2, 23, "Pars alia et hanc pellit astroque," etc.

Fortuna; to defy her. The philosopher then stepped in, and added that it was easy to defy her because Fortune had no power over the mind. And he went even further; he said that Fortune controlled only worldly affairs, that virtue was truly free.

(1) Of the first kind of remedy, which opposes patience to Fortuna, we have plenty of examples. I shall call it the remedy of fortitude:

Virgil (*Aen.* V, 710):

Quidquid erit; superanda omnis fortuna ferendo est.

Ovid (*Metam.* VI, 195):

Major sum, quam cui possit fortuna nocere.

Seneca (*Medea*, 159):

Fortuna fortes metuit, ignavos premit.⁶⁰

With this idea another is naturally harmonious, that Fortune is in the power of the courageous; and so the theme develops "Fortune aids the bold":

Terence (*Phormio* I, 4, 26):

Fortis Fortuna adjuvat.

Virgil (*Aen.* X, 284):

Audentes fortuna juvat.

Livy (*Histor.* VIII, 29):

Eventus docuit fortes fortunam juvare.⁶¹

(2) The method of opposing the intellect to the disorder of Fortuna, which we may call the remedy of prudence, is found in the sneers of the philosophers at the belief in her.⁶² See, for example, Plutarch's discussion:

Εἰ γὰρ ταῦτα γίγνεται διὰ τύχην, τί κωλύει καὶ τὰς γαλᾶς καὶ τοὺς τράγους καὶ τοὺς πιθήκους συνέχεσθαι φάναι διὰ τύχην ταῖς λιχνείαις καὶ

⁶⁰ See also Ovid, *Ex Pont.* II, III, ll. 51; Ennius (Mueller), *Annales* 257; with the opposition of *animus* to F.: Seneca, *Epistola* XCVIII, 7 and 2; *ad Polyb. Consol.* XXIII ff.; *de Prov.* VI, 5; *Medea*, l. 176. A case where F. wins the struggle is found in Virgil, *Aeneid*, V, 22.

⁶¹ See also Claudian, *Ep.* III, 9; Cf. Ovid (*Metam.* X, 586) with the familiar "Audentes deus ipse juvat." It is, of course, akin to the proverb "God helps those who help themselves."

⁶² See Pliny, p. 135 above.

ταῖς ἀκрасίαις καὶ ταῖς βωμολοχίαις;⁶³ and again: ὅτι γὰρ τοῦτοις βραχεῖα τις παρεμπίπτει τύχη, τὰ δὲ πλεῖστα καὶ μέγιστα τῶν ἔργων αἱ τέχναι συντελοῦσι δι' αὐτῶν,⁶⁴ etc.

These passages obviously limit the field of Fortuna's operation. In the second it is implied that man has certain qualities not under the control of the goddess. Such limitation is accomplished by the speculation of the philosopher; and by his very attitude reason is opposed to the whims of chance. The philosopher thus puts certain things out of Fortuna's control.

So Juvenal (*Satira* X, 363):

Monstro quod ipse tibi possis dare, semita certe
tranquillae per virtutem patet unica vitae.
Nullum numen habes si sit prudentia, nos te,
nos facimus, Fortuna, deam caeloque locamus."⁶⁵

(3) This passage implies what the next step was to be. The philosopher proceeded to state clearly just what things were out of the control of Fortuna; and her cults reveal that the things within her control were conceived chiefly as external (not moral) gifts. In the golden age, which was likely to foster materialistic desires, the men went on voyages to gain wealth, and the dominating interest of the time was luxury. It does not appear that anyone went to Fortuna for spiritual advancement. She was not the goddess of the soul, but of worldly interests alone. For evidence of this characteristic, recall merely the frequent repetition of the great Fortuna theme:

⁶³ "And if such things as these can come by Fortune, what hinders but that we may as well plead that cats, goats, and monkeys are constrained by Fortune to be ravenous, lustful, and ridiculous?" Trans. Baxter, Goodwin ed., Plutarch, *de Fortuna* (1), Frgt. 2, *Chaeremon*.

⁶⁴ "For that there falls in but little of Fortune to an expert artist, whether founder or builder, but that the most and greatest part of their workmanship is performed by mere art," etc. *Ibid.*, Plutarch, *de Fortuna* (4), Frgt. 2, *Chaeremon*.

⁶⁵

"What I show
Thyself may freely on thyself bestow;
Fortune was never worship'd by the wise
But, set aloft by fools, usurps the skies,"
Dryden.

Mortalem summum fortuna repente
reddidit e summo regno ut famulus infimus esset.⁶⁶

She dispenses worldly honors. Those who would escape from her control can do so merely by cultivating an interest in virtue. This I shall call the spiritual remedy against Fortune. Take, for instance, the discussion in Seneca:

(*de Constantia Sapientio*, V, 2)

Nihil eripit fortuna, nisi quod dedit: virtutem autem non dat.

(*Ep. LXXIV*, 1)

"Unum Bonum esse, quod Honestum est." Nam, qui alia bona iudicat, in fortunae venit potestatem, alieni arbitrii fit.⁶⁷ The man who does not seek virtue, then, exposes himself to the power of fortune and has no just cause for complaint.

Such are the three great remedies of Roman thought for the adversities of Fortune: the remedy of fortitude, that of prudence, and, finally, that of spiritual devotion. For the development of these remedies Stoicism was probably responsible. They correspond to the virtues of power, wisdom, and religious idealism: those respectively of the body, the mind, and the soul. We may observe that the more complete they are, the nearer they approach an annihilation of the goddess.⁶⁸ If she were really conceived of as a ruler of the universe, it would be vain to oppose her with any means, certainly with that of ordinary endurance. If it is possible to overcome her with intellectual powers, the fact implies another god in the universe who has a sense of order, to which your reason may find clues. Finally, if we hold that by seeking virtue and neglecting the interests of Fortuna we may escape from her control, we are really presupposing a spiritual universe subject to an altogether different deity.

⁶⁶ Ennius, *Annal.* ll. 312. "The most exalted of mortals, F. hath on a sudden brought from supreme power to be the most abject of slaves." Cf. Sallust (*Cat.* 8); Horace (I, XXXV); Nepos, (*Dion.* 6). Compare, too, in this discussion of the relation of F. to virtue the lines already quoted (Seneca, *Phaedrus*, 981 ff.):

Vincit sanctos dira libido,
fraus sublimi regnat in aula.

⁶⁷ See also Seneca, *Phaedrus* 978; Cicero, *de Leg.* ii, 28: "Bene vero quod Mens, Pietas," etc., where the virtues and fortune are distinguished.

⁶⁸ Cf. Fowler, *Roman Ideas of Deity*, p. 77.

III.

We have now defined "the pagan Fortuna" and have observed how she was treated in general and how accepted. Our next problem is to see what in detail Roman literature offers for the imaginative representation of the goddess, and what for the application to everyday life. That is, I shall now study: (1) the personal description of the goddess; (2) favorite themes in her depiction; and (3) the divisions of her cult, and how they were applied to everyday life.

Much of the description of Fortuna is an old story to us because the tradition has lasted even to our day. It is interesting to see the same expressions used in ancient Rome which are used now. (1) She is blind (*caeca*);⁶⁹ (2) yet she uses her eyes sometimes;⁷⁰ (3) she stands unsteadily—often on a globe;⁷¹ (4) she walks unsteadily;⁷² (5) she remains in no place for long;⁷³ (6) her face is sometimes joyful, sometimes bitter;⁷⁴ (7) she is subject to envy;⁷⁵ (8) she becomes a foe;⁷⁶ (9) she is stubborn;⁷⁷ (10) she goes on her own course;⁷⁸ (11) she plays games, and men are the figures in the games, or the objects of her mirth;⁷⁹ (12) she wounds men with her shafts;⁸⁰ (13) she holds dialogues with men;⁸¹ (14) she is a harlot (*meretrix*);⁸² (15) she is a frail (*fragilis*), untrustworthy acquaintance;⁸³ (16) much depends on her smile;⁸⁴ (17)

⁶⁹ See Pliny, *N. H.* 2, 22; Pacuvius (Ribbeck, 365-375).

⁷⁰ See Apuleius, *Metam.* XI, 15; Ovid, *Ex Pont.* III, I, 125.

⁷¹ Pacuvius, *op. cit.*

⁷² Ovid, *Tristia* V, VIII, 15 ff.

⁷³ *Ibid.*; Ausonius (Peiper) XXIII, X, p. 424.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ Virgil, *Aen.* XI, 43; Lucan, *Phars.* I, 82 ff.

⁷⁶ Ovid, *Ex Pont.* III, I, 152. Cf. Plautus, *Asinaria* 727.

⁷⁷ Ovid, *Ex Pont.* IV, VI, 7.

⁷⁸ Ovid, *Epist.* XV, 59-60; Lucan, *Phars.* I, 226; cf. Tibullus, III, iii, 22.

⁷⁹ Seneca, *Ep.* LXXIV, 6-7; Horace, *Carm.* III, XXIX, 49; Juvenal III, 38 ff.

⁸⁰ Ovid, *Ex Pont.* II, VII, 15, 41.

⁸¹ Cf. Seneca, *ad Polyb. Cons.* XXII, 4.

⁸² See, for a beginning of the idea, her relations with Servius Tullius, Ovid, *Fasti* VI, 569 ff. See Dübner, *Anthol. Palat.*, II, 269.

⁸³ Baehrens, *Poet. Lat. Min.*, IV, p. 148, 145; Lucan, *Phars.* VII, 685.

⁸⁴ Ovid, *Trist.* I, V, 27.

she controls animals—a lion, horses,⁸⁵ the geese of Rome.⁸⁶ Such are some of the traits and habits of which we hear in connection with her.⁸⁷

The themes in the treatment of the goddess are those expressions and phrases that particularly found favor in describing her, either because they seemed most characteristic, or because they offered formulae which were easy for literary tradition. Probably those which combined both qualities survived the longest. The most common of these I shall enumerate as follows:

1. Nunc—nunc:

Horace (*Carm.*, III, XXIX, 51–52):

Transmutat incertos honores,
nunc mihi, nunc alii benigna.

2. The adversities which she brings expose our true friends to us. "A friend in need" theme:

Est equidem in laetis nemo non promptus amicus,
ipsa homini adversis umbra inimica sua est.⁸⁸

3. The theme of tragedy. Those who are most exalted are brought low,⁸⁹ and in this process she does not discriminate:

Evertisque bonos, erigis improbos,
nec servare potes muneribus fidem.
Fortuna immeritos auget honoribus,
Fortuna innocuos cladibus adficit.
Iustos illa viros pauperie gravat,
indignos eadem divitiis beat.
Haec aufert iuvenes ac retinet senes,
iniusto arbitrio tempora dividens.
Quod dignis adimit, transit ad impios.
nec descrimen habet rectave iudicat.⁹⁰

⁸⁵ Roscher, 1556; N. E. Lemaire, *Poet. Lat. Min.*, II, p. 298, xii, l. 2.

⁸⁶ See Plutarch, *de Fort. Rom.*, (12).

⁸⁷ There are others, such as the accusation that she is insane, Pacuvius (Ribbeck, 365-375); that she is a Will-o'-the wisp, Ovid, *Trist.* I, IX, 13. See the useful study by Canter, especially pp. 72 ff., adding to the list of epithets in Carter.

⁸⁸ Lemaire, *Poet. Lat. Min.*, vol. II, p. 298, xii, ll. 7-8. See also Ovid, *Ex Pont.* II, III, 23; I, IX, 16; *Trist.* II, 85; *Ex Pont.* IV, III.

⁸⁹ See p. 150 and n. 66.

⁹⁰ Baehrens, *Poet. Lat. Min.*, IV, p. 148, no. 145. See also Pacuvius, (Ribbeck, 365-375).

The simple theme of falling from a high station is very frequent:

Me qui liber fueram servom fecit, e summo infimum.⁹¹

Sometimes Fortuna acts in just punishment of unwonted pride. This, of course, is not consistent with the pagan Fortuna, but is quite consistent with pagan gods in general, who punish ὕβρις:

Ovid (*Trist.* V, VIII, 7):

Nec metuis dubio Fortunae stantis in orbe
numen, et exosae verba superba deae?

When Fortune thus hates man's sinful pride, her feelings may lead her to better practices and a higher course of life.

4. Closely related with the theme of tragedy is that of Fortune's gifts to the poor, and her punishment of the rich:

πῶς τοὺς πένητας πλουσίου ἐργάζεται,
καὶ τοὺς ἔχοντας χρημάτων ἀποστερεῖ.⁹²

Ovid treats this motif, referring to the case of Croesus, which was to become the example *par excellence* in the Middle Ages:

Trist. III, VII, 41—

Nempe dat id quodcumque libet fortuna, rapitque:
irus et est subito, qui modo Croesus erat.⁹³

Such are some of the most important themes which went down in Roman tradition as particular moulds for the thought concerning Fortuna.

The divisions of her great cult, or, as they are sometimes called, the smaller cults, have been pretty thoroughly investigated by students of the subject. I shall not list them here; for my observations do not concern such aspects as we find revealed in Fortuna Bona, Fortuna Obsequens, and Fortuna Felix, but the specific functionary cults.⁹⁴ The question is, what was the significance of these to the daily life of the Roman? What do the cult-names and activities (so far as we know anything about them) tell us of Fortuna's practical functions in Roman life? We may reduce

⁹¹ Plautus, *Captivi* 305. See also Horace, *Carm.* I, XXXV, ll. 3; Juvenal (7, 194 ff.): "de rhetore consul, de consule rhetor;" Ausonius (Peiper) p. 424, XXIII, X, "et summa in imum vertit ac versa erigit." The wheel often comes full circle: Juvenal, III, 39, "quales ex humili," etc.

⁹² Dübner, *Anthol. Pal.*, II, 269, cap. X, 96, from Palladas.

⁹³ See also *Ex Ponto*, IV, III, ll. 37; *Trist.* V, XIV, 29-30.

⁹⁴ In the appendix will be found a list of most of the cults from Roscher, 1508 ff.; Wissowa, *Real-Encyc.*, 16 ff. See Appendix D to this chapter.

the practical meaning of many of the cognomina to that of good or bad Fortune. *Fortuna Viscata* implies merely the characteristic of the deity to lure. In *Fortuna Populi Romani* and *Fortuna Publica Citerior* we have practically a goddess of the city, which is what the *Fortuna Populi Romani Quiritium Primigenia* really is. With this kind of deity belongs that of the different classes, such as *Fortuna Mammosa* of the lower class, the *Fortuna* of the guilds, and the like. Secondly, we have *Fortuna* concerned with love and marriage,—for example, in *Fortuna Virilis*, to whom women sacrificed on April first (as it happened, the same day as that of a festival of *Venus*).⁹⁵ Various related are the *Fortuna Barbata* and *Fortuna Muliebris*—the former, the *Fortuna* of growing youths; the latter, of grateful mothers.⁹⁶ Third, we have the deity who guides—*Fortuna Dux*⁹⁷ and *Fortuna Redux*.⁹⁸ These two were imperial in origin, and concerned particularly with guiding Augustus across the sea.⁹⁹ There are two concerns here, then,—*Fortuna*, the guide; and *Fortuna* of the sea. Fifth, *Fortuna* of the individual,—that is, the *Fortuna* of the royal house, which was a specialization of the goddess of the different classes;¹⁰⁰ and also, perhaps, of such cults as *Fortuna Obsequens* and *Fortuna Conservatrix* and even *Fortuna Domestica*. Sixth, there is another function of the goddess implied in references to her, if not set forth in a separate cult,—the *Fortuna* of war.¹⁰¹ It is she who confers the laurel of victory.

The actual cults are referred to in literature with the specific names. We have references to such as *Fortuna Huiusce Diei*, *Fortuna Spes*, *Fortuna Respiciens*, *Fortuna Primigenia*, *Fortuna*

⁹⁵ See Roscher, 1518. Gaidoz cites Wieseler, *de Scala*, pp. 16-17, as conjecturing that *F.* came from an Asiatic *Venus*. See Appendix C to this chapter.

⁹⁶ Roscher, 1519.

⁹⁷ Roscher, 1528.

⁹⁸ Roscher, 1525.

⁹⁹ See the symbol of the Rudder and the Prow. See Roscher, 1504-7.

¹⁰⁰ See the golden image in the sleeping chamber of Marcus Aurelius, Roscher 1524. "Dem allgemeinen Glauben folgend verehrten auch die Kaiser ihre eigene *Fortuna* als persönliche Schutzgöttin," Roscher, 1523. See also *F. Privata*, Roscher, 1518.

¹⁰¹ See, Roscher 1516, *Tuditanus* and the Temple of *F. Primigenia*; Roscher, 1526, altars raised at the victory of the Emperor. In 89 B. C. on the return of Domitian from Germany, a temple of *Fortuna Redux* was erected on the Field of Mars. Roscher 1540: "Nicht selten findet sich *Fortuna* mit den Gottheiten des Krieges und Sieges, Mars und Victoria, verbunden."

Obsequens, and others.¹⁰² More interesting still we have the literary reflection of some of these cults without the name actually mentioned. In other words, we can observe Fortuna at work: Fortuna of the city:

Regnum Trojae, quocumque volet, Fortuna ferat.¹⁰³
Quae fortuna sit urbi.¹⁰⁴

Fortuna of the sea:

Dum mea puppis erat valida fundata carina,
qui mecum velles currere, primus eras.
Nunc, quia contraxit vultum Fortuna, recedis
auxilio postquam scis opus esse tuo, etc.¹⁰⁵

In these treatments Fortuna generally seems to control the ship from a port of vantage behind the wind and storm.

Fortuna of war:

Illum tamen Fortuna jactavit diu
terra marique per graves belli vices.¹⁰⁶

Fortuna, bestowing victory, consequently bestowed fame:

Non ita se nobis praebet fortuna secundam,
ut tibi sit ratio laudis habenda tuae.¹⁰⁷

These are the more important groups. I do not include the lesser classifications, such as the early Fortuna of the harvest;¹⁰⁸ Fortuna the bestower of riches.¹⁰⁹ All these references simply show that it was natural, when the Roman thought of the goddess, to think

¹⁰² Cicero, *de Leg.* II, 28; Plautus, *Asinaria* 716, *Rudens* 501. See partic. Ovid in the *Fasti* (VI, 569, 771 ff.) See also Lucan, *Pharsalia* II, 193, for Praeneste.

¹⁰³ Seneca, *Troades* 735.

¹⁰⁴ *Aen.* I, 454; see also *Aen.* VI, 62; Ovid, *Metam.* XIII, 435; Lucan, *Phars.* I, 256.

¹⁰⁵ Ovid, *Ex Pont.* IV, III, ll. 5; see also Seneca, *ad Marc. Consol.* XXVI, 1 (nescis quantis f. procellis disturbet omnia?); Lucan, *Phars.* VIII, 313; Ovid, *Trist.* V, XII, 5, F. herself is blown by the winds; storm, Ovid, *Ex Pont.* II, III, 23 ff.

¹⁰⁶ Seneca, *Octavia* 479-80; Ovid, *Metam.* X, 603; Virgil, *Aen.* XI, 108; IV, 603; Lucan, *Phars.* IV, 711-12. The expression *fortuna belli*, without personification, occurs of course: Seneca, *Phoenisse* l. 629; Ovid, *Metam.* VIII, 12; XIII, 90; Lucan, *Phars.* IV, 402.

¹⁰⁷ Ovid, *Trist.* I, I, 51; see also IV, III, 81; V, XIV, 3.

¹⁰⁸ With the cornucopia, which was very popular and was frequently pictured in art. See many references in Roscher, 1503 ff. and *passim*; see also Columella (*de Cultu Hort.*, X, 311).

¹⁰⁹ See p. 153, §4, above.

of her in connection with one of the well-known cults, operating in her special function.

IV.

We are now ready to complete our idea of the Roman Fortuna by examining briefly the religious background of the period. I have already noticed that by the end of the second Punic War the old gods of Rome were defunct, or else disguised in new figures, with the exception of a very few, such as Vesta, Janus, the Lares, and Jupiter.¹¹⁰ Religion declined with the introduction of a large number of foreign gods, nearly all of which were adopted more out of policy than conviction.¹¹¹ With the increase of campaigns and the growth of interest in the foreign world, Rome felt the need of the support of all the ruling spirits, and would sacrifice to any god if help were to be obtained. So came the popularity of the haruspices, the use of lots. Divination became wide-spread. And with this comes the "separation of religion from morality."¹¹² At the time of the Second Punic War a new wave swept over the country, and Ennius introduced the Epicurean Philosophy. While before, the gods were still of interest to man because they could predict the future to him (although they were less concerned with his moral state), now they were entirely indifferent to him—and he to them; and about their misdoings the Roman began to make jests.¹¹³ Later Stoicism reduced all deities to one, but at least gave that one power and life.¹¹⁴

It is natural that when the interest in divination and augury was strong, Fortuna should gain in power and take an important place if she had not assumed it before.¹¹⁵ The convenient oracle of Fortuna Primigenia at Praeneste, with its fortune-telling lots, is enough to explain that. And later, when an interest in the mystical gained strength,¹¹⁶ "The growing interest in Fortuna,

¹¹⁰ Wissowa, *R. K.*, p. 56; Fowler, *Relig. Exper.*, 248 ff.

¹¹¹ See above, p. 139 and note 28.

¹¹² See for a full and interesting discussion, Fowler, *Relig. Exper.*, 292; also. Carter, the *Relig. Life of Anc. Rome*, ch. II.

¹¹³ See Fowler, *Relig. Exper.*, 352, with ref. to the *Amphitruo* of Plautus.

¹¹⁴ Fowler, *ibid.*, 362 ff.

¹¹⁵ See p. 147 note 59, above.

¹¹⁶ Fowler, *Relig. Exper.*, 380 ff.

both as a natural force and deity, which became intense under the Empire, is another indication" of that tendency as well.¹¹⁷

When Augustus was trying to revive the old gods and establish the new, refounding the colleges of priests, and showing an interest in the old feast-days,¹¹⁸ he did not feel a need to add strength to Fortuna; but involuntarily he did adopt her as his own, and formed his own cult.¹¹⁹ It is, in a way, an age of great religious interest; a wide and scattered, but not a deep, interest. There was suspicion about the unknown. Signs of the decadence are visible, for example, in the orgies of the Magna Mater.¹²⁰ From one point of view, it is an age of pure superstition; from another, that of unbounded imagination, a zest for the unknown, a shining enthusiasm for the new. It is a virile, physically active, but romantic age.

As one views the situation, one will describe it with one's own terminology and call it decadent or golden. In either case let us remember its wealth in literary activity and in military prowess. Let us also bear in mind its lack of a clearly systematized philosophy. It was trying its own mental resources vainly and needed a revelation. It was a Renaissance and Reformation in need of the Middle Ages. At such a time it is natural that Fortuna, the goddess of chance should prevail over the god of order and rationality.

Heitland's summary of the situation is as follows: "The decay of the public religion had little or no effect upon popular superstition; indeed the growth of disbelief in divine interference had rather cleared the ground for the worship of Fortune."¹²¹ And Carter says: "It was only the growth of skepticism, the failure of faith to bear up under the apparently contradictory lessons of experience, which brought into being in the Alexandrian age Tyche, the goddess of chance, the winged capricious deity poised on the ball. It is this habit of thought which eventually gave the Romans that idea of Fortuna which has become our idea

¹¹⁷ Fowler, *ibid.*, pp. 396-7.

¹¹⁸ Wissowa, *R. K.*, 73 ff.; Fowler, *Relig. Exper.*, 428 ff., "The Augustan Revival."

¹¹⁹ See for discussion of personal cults p. 154, above.

¹²⁰ Fowler, *Relig. Exper.*, 330 ff.

¹²¹ Heitland, II, 464, §872.

because it is the prevalent one in Roman literature and life in the periods with which we are most familiar."¹²²

V.

The points thus far discussed, I may briefly summarize as follows: (1) whatever her origin, Fortuna flourished in Rome, and attained her fullest development under the Empire; (2) this is due to the fact that during the early Empire there was the greatest emphasis on the unknown; (3) she absorbed the functions of many of the other gods; (4) particular themes were used in her literary treatment; (5) her vitality grew the stronger as Roman religion decayed and fell to pieces. These facts make her survival in a monotheistic period seem at least possible and comprehensible. She was the last of the gods, and consequently retained most of their radiance, while the rest faded in twilight.¹²³ She flourished on the skepticism which might corrode any well organized religion. She appealed to man in moments of his greatest weakness and greatest strength. Her variety appealed to poetic fancy. The tenacity of her hold on the popular mind worried the philosophers. Such are her charms in Rome;¹²⁴ and with such brilliance the long pageant of her career begins.

¹²² Carter, *Relig. of Numa*, pp. 50 ff.

¹²³ "In tutelam iam receptus es Fortunae, sed videntis; quae suae lucis splendore ceteros etiam deos illuminat," Apuleius, *Metam.* XI, 15. This is written concerning the Isis-Fortuna.

¹²⁴ Fowler has written a full and interesting article on Fortuna in Rome for Hastings, *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, VI, pp. 98 ff. He attacks the problem from a point of view entirely different from that in the present study. But while his results are somewhat different from mine, since he deals with the problem of individual faith, nothing that he says tends to obscure the fact of the enormous power of the worship in this period.

CHAPTER II

THE PERIOD OF TRANSITION

The actual change of philosophy and religion in Rome from paganism to Christianity is a highly complicated process. The change is not merely external, as might be inferred, for example, from the destruction of old idols and fanes, and worship at new temples on a new feast-day. It is spiritual, and it involves the larger question of how far spiritual man can really change from age to age; whether man intellectually and morally does change.

If we are to believe that Fortuna ceased to exist as a power at the beginning of the new era, we must consider whether man can change so completely as to drop an old creed in every detail and take up a new. Evidence of a complete or of a partial change will have to be found, of course, in conscious confession of one kind or another; but not exclusively. Man gives indications of his beliefs unconsciously in other ways. His chief interests, what he talks most about and recurs to in case of need, what he declares in a moment of sudden surprise,—these are the kinds of data that give more positive information. Rome laid aside paganism and adopted Christianity according to Rome's professed faith; but for a study of the actual faith of the Roman people, we must practically disregard the official declaration and look further.

This way of dealing with the problem seems a trifle impudent. It is not so impudent, however, to believe that man's religion is more enduring than the lives of his philosophers, that it lies deeper in his heart of hearts than impulsive consciousness. Moreover, it is characteristic of man, when he faces a new creed, to accept its main tenets and let them work out their own consistencies in his soul. The smaller details will follow later. He is unable to grasp them all at once, no matter how clear their truth may be, and he certainly cannot instantly put them in working order. The religion of human life is greater than deliberate philosophy; the religion that really damns or saves is partly dependent on ancient mental habit.

It cannot be expected, then, that the Romans would immediately lay aside every vestige of their old faith and take up the new, *tabula rasa*. Was not the Roman of the fifth century very much the same sort of man inwardly, with much the same sort of capacities and limitations, as the man of the Augustan age? Would he not feel the dangers of a long voyage, or the risk of a great experiment in the unknown? His new religion might give him comfort, but he would first feel the desire for it. One must therefore ask whether the Roman really discarded all of his old mental habits when he laid aside their outward signs. Did he always faithfully employ the possibilities of his new religion? Christianity upheld the one God; and the Christian Roman must cleave to the one God and forsake the old deities entirely. Could he as a man, in his moments of weakness, hold to the belief in this great, personal rational Deity, whose scheme included him and all the details of his life? Could he feel that he was cared for at every moment by the one God? It seems more reasonable to think that, in certain emergencies, he would create for himself the gods he was fitted by character to create; and that, as these gods approached the Christian conception, so he himself became more of a Christian. From another point of view, he would retain the old gods that were familiar to him, even if he did not give them their old names.

This, at any rate, is the postulate on which the proposition of a continued life for the goddess Fortuna from paganism to Christianity depends. Her vitality, if real, indicates that man in any period is after all pretty much the same. Whatever the variation of customs and styles, the church pagan or Christian labored with mankind and the human soul, and not with theories. At one time it might be legitimate to believe in the element of chance: at another time, it might be heretical; but the belief itself could persist as long as man remained man. One comment on the early state of things is that of Cumont: "Tyche, or deified fortune, became the irresistible mistress of mortals and immortals alike, and was even worshiped exclusively by some under the empire. Our deliberate will never plays more than a very limited part in our happiness and success, but, among the pronunciamientos and in the anarchy of the third century, blind chance seemed to play with the life of every one according to its fancy, and it can easily be

understood that the ephemeral rulers of that period, like the masses, saw in chance the sovereign disposer of their fates."¹

The possibility of faith in Fortuna is obviously not limited to Rome. A belief in a goddess of chance is possible anywhere; and a belief in Fortuna is possible wherever Roman civilization extended itself. This is another phase of the transition. Cumont goes on to say: "In Latin Europe in spite of the anathemas of the church the belief remained confusedly alive all through the Middle Ages that on this earth everything happens somewhat 'Per ovra delle rote magne.'"²

This survival in the Middle Ages is indicated, as we shall see, by frequent references to Fortuna; by the stern attitude of the Church, which proves that the belief was felt to be a real menace; and by the methods with which the Church faced the problem.

The appearance of the goddess in the fourth and fifth centuries, with the trappings that are familiar to us as hers in ancient Rome (or, as I shall call this continuation of the old cult, "the pagan tradition"), is perhaps the most important fact for us to consider in our whole study of Fortuna. For this is the persistence of the goddess of chance. She survived in early Christian times and her worship was an integral part of the still flourishing pagan religion. Christianity was already in the ascendant; but polytheism had not yet yielded, and the Church Fathers were opposing it with all their strength. Again, Fortuna is frequently met with in literary works from the fourth century to Dante and beyond. Finally, she plays an important part in the continued custom of divination or fortune-telling. Through these channels the pagan deity found access to the stream of Medieval tradition and to the knowledge of the ordinary man of the Middle Ages. The unlearned as well as the learned could hear of her, and become acquainted with her characteristics.

The early fathers show that they knew the worship well as a recognized part of that pagan religion which had not been quite discountenanced. The actual cults are mentioned,—in Tertullian, for example, that of Fortuna Barbata,³ and Fortuna Muliebris.⁴

¹ Cumont, 179. He says that the view spread from Babylonia and imposed itself even on Islam.

² *Ibid.*, 179, ff.

³ Migne, Tertull. I, 601, *Ad Nationes* II, 11.

⁴ Migne, Tertull. II, 952, Series II, xvii, *Moralia*, *Lib. de Monog.*

Arnobius describes:⁵ "Mulciber fabrili cum habitu; aut fortuna cum cornu, pomis, ficis, aut frugibus autumnalibus pleno." Lactantius gives an ample discussion of the worship; specifically of Fortuna Muliebris, and Fortuna Dux; and retells the story of the Censor Fulvius, who stole marble tiles from the temple of the Lacinian Juno for the temple of Fortuna Equestris.⁶ St. Augustine touches on Fortuna Muliebris and Fortuna Barbata.⁷ These passages in St. Augustine bring us down to the fifth century after Christ.

The pagan tradition of Fortuna is necessarily involved in the continued practice of divination. Fortuna in the old Latin worship at Praeneste had consented to give oracular utterance. Her will and decrees were interpreted by means of drawing lots.⁸ As late as the fourth century, Lactantius reports an image of Fortune which spoke: "Illud etiam mirabile, quod simulacrum Fortunae muliebre non semel locutum esse traditur."⁹ And St. Augustine has perhaps the same image in mind when he says: "Quod illa dea locuta est, quae fortuitu accidit, non quae meritis venit."¹⁰

Both oracle and fortune-telling are means of consulting the ruling goddess on the future; but the medium of communication in the latter is different. Fortune-telling attempts to read haphazard destiny by fitting to it an instrument of expression the very operation of which involves a large element of chance. Apparently the theory is that the goddess who delights in chance will consent to reveal her intentions by allowing the proper lot to be drawn or the proper card to appear, because these methods defy reason and order.

In the seventh century St. Eligius denounces divination and fortune-telling with no uncertain words: "Ante omnia autem illud denuntio atque contestor, ut nullus paganorum sacrilegas

⁵ Migne, Arnobius, V, 1214, *Adversus Gentes*, Lib. Sextus. See also V, 912.

⁶ Migne, Lactantius, VI, 289, 290. See ref. to F. Dux, Lactantius VI, 442.

⁷ Migne, St. Aug., XLI (126 f.), *De Civ. Dei*, 4, 19; XLI (122), 4, 11. The discussion of F. Barbata is delightful: "Ipse sit et Fortuna Barbata, quae adultos barba induat; quos honorare noluerunt, ut hoc quaecunque numen saltem masculum deum, vel a barba Barbatum sicut a nodis Nodutum, vel certe non Fortunam, sed quia barbas habet, Fortunium nominarent." Cf. Migne, Lactantius, VI, 440.

⁸ Roscher, 1544.

⁹ Migne, Lactantius, VI, 289.

¹⁰ Migne, St. Aug., XLI (127) *De Civ. Dei*, 4, 19.

consuetudines observetis, non caragos, non divinos, non sortilogos, non praecantatores, nec pro ulla causa aut infirmitate eos consulere vel interrogare praesumatis, quia qui facit hoc malum, statim perdit baptismi sacramentum.”¹¹ He warns against holding pagan festivals, carrying on the pagan practices, invoking the pagan gods (as when the moon darkens), and visiting pagan fanes: “Nullus sibi proponat fatum vel fortunam aut genesim, quod vulgo nascentia dicitur, ut dicat, qualem nascentia attulit, taliter erit: quia Deus omnes homines vult salvos fieri et ad agnitionem veritatis venire adque omnia in sapientia dispensat, sicut disposuit ante constitutionem mundi.”¹² The pagans were not dead yet! Discussions of divination do not cease nor fortune telling with them even to our own enlightened day.¹³ It is not suprising that Aristotle was held to be a specialist in the craft and knew:

With other Crafftys which that be secre,
Calculacioun and Geomancye,
Difformacyouns of Circes and meede,
lokyng of ffacycs and piromancye.”¹⁴

Fortune-telling, it is particularly important to note, would naturally appeal to the lower classes rather than to the higher. And this appeal, like that of the cults in the Roman worship of Fortuna (after the worship was officially smothered), would continue the pagan tradition so that it could smoulder without

¹¹ Professor John Livingston Lowes of Harvard University drew my attention to this passage. (*Monumenta Germaniae Histor., Scriptorum Rerum Merov.*, IV, Bruno Krusch, *Passiones Vitaeque Sanctorum*, etc., *Vitae Elig.*, II, 16^a, p. 705.)

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 707, ll. 9.

¹³ For later ref. see: geomancy, Dante, *Purg.* XIX, 4, “Fortuna Major,” (discuss. *Academy*, Nov. 3, 1894, p. 352, W. W. Skeat; suppl. discuss. *Acad.*, Jan. 1895, p. 39, R. Brown.) And *Troilus and Criseyde*, III, 1420; Dunbar, ed. John Small, Scottish Text Soc., 1893, vol. II, p. 62, line 79, (Ballad of Lord Bernard Stewart). See, in general: Vincent of Beauvais, *Spec. Histor.*, I, c. x; (sortilegium) Raymond of Pennaforte, *Summula Raymundi*, (Cologne, 1502), fol. cxxvi-cxxvii; Robert Holcot, *Sup. libr. sap.*, lectio CIII (et tunc fantasia format sibi consilia idola, etc.); Guillaume de Guileville, *Peler. de l’Homme*, ff. lxxii (Geomancie, Idolatrie, Sortileige, and Sorcerie appear); Eustache Deschamps, ed. Soc. Anc. Textes Français, VII, 192 ff., (MCCCLXI), see p. 197: “Mais communement tous ceuls qui par telz ars s’esforcent de sçavoir les fortunes advenir,” etc.; Henryson, ed. D. Laing, Edinburgh, 1865, *Orph. and Eur.*, lines 571 ff. See the actual “wheel of fortune-telling” discussed by Max Förster, Herrig’s *Archiv für das Studium der neueren Sprachen*, vol. cxxix, §18, pp. 45-49.

¹⁴ Lydgate, *Secrees of Old Philos.*, ed. Steele, p. 16, st. 72.

much disturbance as long as it remained hidden. The less cultivated classes would not bother about discrepancies in their faith, and would hardly realize an intellectual heresy.

The learned tradition is likely to be found in the literary world, where those who were acquainted with Classical literature took over the forms and mythology of that literature rather freely. In one sense the material here may not seem quite so significant, except as necessary concomitant evidence. If Fortuna has survived, she must appear in this field along with the other gods. Yet there is argument to be drawn even from literature when the goddess appears in unexpected places, and when we find unusual devotion to what ought to be a mere poetic figure. After all, the literary treatment in ancient Rome is not very extensive; Fortuna is not described in long passages of elaborate detail. She was formally accepted as a deity, and the average author was not excited by the idea of a goddess of chance. In the Middle Ages, on the other hand, the author felt that she deserved special emphasis, partly, perhaps, because she was out of ecclesiastical favor, but more likely because he appreciated the opportunity for giving expression to what was a generally popular conception. And so the variety of ways in which she was mentioned, the space she occupies in literature, and the author's kindled imagination in depicting her, are really of the greatest significance in our study.

MARTIANUS CAPELLA

In that elaborate allegory of Martianus Capella,¹⁵ *De Nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii*, which is almost the first of the truly Medieval allegories in method and style, Fortuna is introduced among the other Roman deities. She is the last to come to the council of the gods, who are convening to discuss the marriage. We must notice, first of all, the rich detail of her description and the reality of her appearance:

Tunc etiam omnium garrula puellarum et contrario semper fluibunda luxu levitate pernix desultoria gestiebat. quam alii Sortem asserunt Nemesimque non nulli Tychenque quam plures aut Nortiam. haec autem quoniam gremio largiore totius orbis ornamenta portabat et aliis impertiens repentinis motibus conferebat rapiens his comas puellariter caput illis virga comminuens eisdemque

¹⁵ Fourth and fifth centuries, A. D.

quibus fuerat eblandita ictibus crebris verticem complicatisque in condylos digitis vulnerabat.¹⁶

She is distinguished from the Fates by her desire to confuse their orderly arrangement of destiny:

Haec mox Fata conspexit omnia quae gerebantur in Iovis consistorio subnotare, ad eorum libros et pugillarem paginam cucurrit, et licentiore quadam fiducia quae conspexerat, inopinata descriptione corripuit, ut quaedam repente prorumpentia velut rerum seriem perturbarent, alia vero, quae causarum ratio prospecta vulgaverat quoniam facere inprovisa non poterat suis tamen operibus arrogabat.¹⁷

Martianus pauses to identify her with the various names by which she was evidently known. She was clearly no stranger.

There are sporadic references to the pagan Fortuna down through the first part of the Middle Ages. Such are those, for example, in Pope Sylvester the Second (Gerbert of Aurillac) of the tenth century;¹⁸ in the twelfth century, in the two poems about the fall of the City of Milan at the hands of Frederic the First,¹⁹ in Orderic Vitalis,²⁰ Walter Map,²¹ and Abelard and Heloise.²² In the minor poetry of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries appear some long descriptions of Fortuna's character

¹⁶ Capella, ed. Eyssenhardt, p. 24, ll. 9(88); see also mention p. 18(55) and note. "Then too that chatterbox among women, ever abandoning herself to fickle pleasures, swift with lightness moved gaily shifting from one thing to another. Some call her *Sors* and some *Nemesis*, more *Tyche* or *Nortia*. Inasmuch as she bore in her ample bosom the glories of the whole world, and granted and bestowed them upon now one, now another with sudden movement, wresting from some their hair with girlish caprice, smashing the head of others with her wand, the same persons on whom she had bestowed her blandishments she would wound upon the head with frequent blows and with her fingers clenched." For help in this translation I am indebted to Dr. Henry W. Litchfield.

¹⁷ "When presently she beheld the Fates writing down all that went on in Jove's council, she ran to their books and note-tablet, and with saucy boldness she swept together in unexpected order the things which she had seen done, with the result that certain events, bursting suddenly into being, confused as it were the orderly arrangement of events. Other events, again, which had been foretold by man's perception of their causation, seeing that she could not make them unexpected, nevertheless she claimed as works of her own."

¹⁸ Migne, cxxxix, col. 204, *Ep.* 12; also col. 214-15, *Ep.* 44, 45, 46.

¹⁹ *Neues Archiv*, XI, 468: *Gedicht auf die Zerst. Mail*. See also *Gesta di Frederico*, ll. 1674, etc.

²⁰ Bouquet, *Recueil*, XII, 723 C-D., Amalricus de Montfort.

²¹ Map, ed. Thos. Wright, p. 2, etc.

²² Migne, 179, col. 194, *Ep.* IV.

and activities. For example, there is a poem (which was probably sung) in the form of a complaint to the pagan goddess: "O Fortuna quam sit mutabilis"—

1. O varium

Fortunae lubricum
 Dans dubium
 Tribunal judicum,
 Non modicum
 Paras huic praemium,
 Quem tollere
 Tua vult gratia
 Et petere
 Rotae similia,
 Dans dubia
 Tamen praepostere
 De stercore
 Pauperem erigens,
 De rhetore
 Consulem eligens.²³

The poem continues to summarize the traditional views concerning Fortuna: she fails her friends; what happened to Darius and Pompey? the higher they were, the harder they fell; what of Troy? of Carthage? and so on. Also there are bits of poetry about the pagan Fortune in the *Laborintus* of Eberhardus (1212).²⁴

Poetry with plenty of traditional Fortune material is found in the drinking songs of the *Carmina Burana*. They have a genial tone, in spite of their theme of lament:

O Fortuna
 velut luna
 statu variabilis
 semper crescis
 aut decrescis
 vita detestabilis
 nunc obdurat

²³ Dreves, *Analecta Hymnica*, XXI, p. 102, no. 152. Thirteenth Century; see note p. 103. Also in *Carmina Burana*, ed. Schmeller, LXXV, p. 45.

²⁴ Leyser, *Historia Poetar.*, p. 853. See also Geoffrey de Vinsauf, p. 864, ll. 60 (*Noeva Poetria*); p. 953 (1591). See also Jak. Werner, *Beiträge zur Kunde*, etc., (XII Cent., see p. 1), 2, p. 3, ll. 18-19; 49, p. 23, ll. 13. See also Thos. Wright, *Sat. Poets*, I, p. 234; p. 301 (reminiscent of Ovid); II, p. 112.

et tunc curat
 ludo mentis aciem
 'egestatem,'
 potestatem
 dissolvit ut glaciem.²⁵

The song gives an account of the lady and her games, and regrets that she is contrary to mankind. Another interesting complaint is the following:

1. Fortune plango vulnera
 stillantibus ocellis,
 quod sua mihi munera
 subtrahit rebellis;
 verum est quod legitur,
 fronte capillata
 sed plerumque sequitur
 Occasio calvata.
2. In Fortune solio
 sederam elatus
 prosperitatis vario
 flore coronatus
 quicquid 'tamen' florui
 felix et beatus
 nunc a summo corruui
 gloria privatus.
3. Fortune rota volvitur,
 descendo minoratus,
 alter in altum tollitur
 nimis exaltatus;
 rex sedet in vertice,
 caveat ruinam,
 nam sub axe legimus
 'Hecubam' reginam.²⁶

These songs and complaints are important because they are much richer than the Roman descriptions of the goddess; and because they make frequent use of the direct apostrophe. By the thir-

²⁵ *Carmina Burana*, ed. Schmeller, (XIII Cent. MS.) no. 1, p. 1. Cf. Novati, *Carmina Medii Aevi*, Epigrammata, p. 44, VI.

²⁶ *Carm. Bur.* LXXVII, p. 47. See also LXXV, p. 45 (in part quoted above, p. 166); LXXVI, p. 47; and 78, p. 166 (st. 4); 114, p. 189 (st. 4); 174, p. 233 (st. 3); p. 234 (st. 5, 11).

teenth century, then, the stock of formulae has been greatly increased. The authors take a sort of sentimental delight in dwelling on the hardships Fortuna has brought about. The tragic theme—"once I was in high estate, now I have fallen low"—is greatly elaborated.²⁷ It seems possible that from this mass of songs and minor poems—almost jingles—developed many of the quick and ready formulae and the unending lists of paradoxes which form so large a part of the Medieval tradition.

NIGELLUS WIREKER

The *Speculum Stultorum* of Nigellus Wireker is such an important poem for the Middle Ages from the time of its composition (the latter part of the twelfth century) down even to Chaucer's day that it deserves special emphasis. It reflects the forms and substance of the contemporary portrayals of the goddess. Here, however, Fortuna is sometimes favorable. One must look out for her! Be as wary of good Fortune as of evil:

Si fortuna modo gravis est, conversa repente
 Quod grave portamus alleviabit onus.
 Tempora labuntur, dominique cadunt, renovantur
 Servi, vulgus abit, area lata patet.

Quae veniunt subito, subito quandoque recedunt;
 Prospera cum duris mixta venire solent.
 Fortuitos casus non est vitare volentum,
 Nemo futurorum praescius esse potest.

* * * * *

Casibus in laetis magis est metuanda voluptas
 Segnius in vitium tristia corda ruunt.
 Integra Troja fuit dum se suspectus utrimque
 Subtraxit durus hostis ab hoste suo.

* * * * *

Si fortuna dedit dudum mihi dulcia, quare
 Dedigner sub ea paucula dura pati?²⁸

Such are the ways afforded for a continuation of the pagan Fortuna in the records of the transitional period and later. They

²⁷ See early reference to complaints, etc., in Lactantius (Migne, VI, 438), *Div. Inst.*, III, xxviii.

²⁸ Thos. Wright, *Sat. Poets*, I, pp. 21 ff. See also, p. 31; p. 61; (*Ad Dom. Gul.*) p. 234.

form a bridge for the difficult passage of the gap between paganism and Christianity. Fortuna retained her hold on the superstitious by bestowing her favor on divination and fortune-telling. Men might forget her for a while, but they would remember her again when they desired to learn about the future. She was a convenient figure for allegory, if the author was disposed to quarrel with what would ordinarily be attributed to the workings of the Fates. To the man who had a general complaint against his destiny, she probably seemed a deity to be found fault with less impiously than the Christian God.

The great Medieval scholar, Graf, interpreted the situation in the following manner: "The populace, who understand little and care less about the subtle disputes and more subtle distinctions of the theologians and the philosophers, never abandoned faith in one or more powers, occult and irresistible, distinct and separate from the divine will, and variously designated, as the case might be, by the name of destiny, fortuna, or astrological influence."²⁹ As a goddess, it is thus fair to assume, Fortuna was not peculiarly Roman except in name. Rome had developed a worship independent, in a sense, of foreign influence; so the Middle Ages created Fortuna in response to a particular human need or weakness, and only her name was borrowed. In the literary and artistic reflection of her cult, a great deal more was taken over. All the Roman tradition in literary substance and style, all the symbolic equipment that the Middle Ages cared for, was freely adopted.³⁰

²⁹ Graf, *Miti, Leggende e Superstizioni*, I, p. 276.

³⁰ In my next paper I hope to study the development in other fields of Medieval literature, beginning with the treatment in the Church Fathers.

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER I

A—In explaining why Varro does not include Fortuna in his third class, that of *dii selecti*, Axtell, a student of the deification of abstractions in Rome, says: "Gods like Janus, Jupiter, . . . were more important because they had varied functions, were more personal, had certain semi-historical biographies preserved in literature, were not transparent in their names, and were considered by the common people as their great gods."¹ But St. Augustine, a careful student of Varro, shows a realization of the power of Fortuna in Rome. As to the actual belief of the common people we shall probably never know most of the facts. And as to the transparency of the name, that means nothing unless we know that the goddess is already without power for other causes; the connotation of any word, abstraction or not, depends on the association of it in the Roman mind. That Fortuna has no "biography" is remarkable, but the *di indigetes* had no biographies so far as we know.² How varied Fortuna's functions were, has been discussed in the general study. How "personal" the goddess was is not a question of her power necessarily. Oftentimes too clear or too specific a conception may mean a weakness of conception which requires the support of detail. For me, a case in point is the vague and mystical deity of Dante in comparison with the clearer deity of Milton.

Just what Axtell means by "personal" may be seen from another statement of his: "Elevated to the rank of divinity and provided with temples, flamens, priests, altars, and all the where-withall of a real cult, [the abstractions] are nevertheless practically mere qualities or states restricted to this, that, and the other, a nondescript and shadowy crowd that cannot be classified with the anthropomorphic gods nor the materialistic spirits of the Indigitamenta." But he qualifies this by adding: "Nevertheless,

¹ Axtell, 73.

² Fortuna has legends telling of her dealings with mankind. See the stories of Galba, Numerius Suffustius, and, most of all, Servius Tullius, in Roscher, 1523; 1544.

they serve a purpose and perform a function very similar, and indeed in some cases exactly equivalent, to a god whom the Romans worshiped in a highly personal way."³

Axtell's chief example is the ode of Horace: "When Horace (*Carm.* i. 35) invoked Fortuna . . . how did he conceive of Necessitas, personified as highly as Fortuna and placed in her train with Spes and Fides, recognized deities? Was he not conscious that Necessitas was not regarded as a goddess by the state or people? Did he not perceive the incongruity in placing a mere concept of the imagination in close relation with an actual deity, or did he really consider Necessitas divine? We cannot say. But for purposes of discrimination it is safer to assume, when known deities and otherwise unauthenticated deities are mentioned together in highly imaginative passages, that the former are lowered to rhetorical lay-figures rather than that the latter are exalted to actual celestial beings."⁴

This argument, which obviously depends on an arbitrary interpretation of highly imaginative passages, does not seem to me cogent. In general, the juxtaposition of personifications and deities hardly implies a weakness in the conception of the latter. Aeschylus introduces symbolism. Milton makes Death the child of Sin and Satan, and puts the Graces in the Garden of Eden. As to the other deities, Spes and Fides, in the Horatian passage, Axtell has curiously overlooked the fact that the lines do not refer to separate deities at all. These figures simply represent the well-known cults of Fortuna. We have the Fortuna of horticulture:

Te pauper ambit sollicita prece
ruris colonus.⁵

Fortuna Redux:

. . . . Te dominam aequoris,
quicumque Bithyna lacescit
Carpathium pelagus carina.⁶

Next the poem treats of the fear of Fortuna among the people.

³ Axtell, 97.

⁴ Axtell, 68. Cf. p. 146, n. 53 above.

⁵ ll. 5 ff. "Thee the poor country man courts with anxious prayer." Trans. Wickham.

⁶ ll. 6 ff. "Thee queen of the ocean, whoever tempts in Bithynian bark the Carpathian sea." *Ibid.*

She is not to be avoided—stern Necessity goes before her; but Hope and Faith never desert her. Thus we have the cults Fortuna Spes and Fides Fortuna:⁷

Te Spes et albo rara Fides colit
velata panno.⁸

It seems, on the whole, safer to consider that the goddess is more than a lay-figure, when we remember that she was already recognized as a deity with a strong cult at Antium (the one that engages Horace's attention), another at Praeneste, and a good deal of priestly "wherewithall" in Rome. The poem shows no other signs of skepticism, no sneer that the size of the cult would almost certainly elicit. If the general popularity of the goddess inspired the author to write the poem, a feeling of the emptiness of the conception would surely appear. Axtell says elsewhere, "Only Fortuna, Victoria, and to a far less extent Salus, Felicitas, and Virtus, had personality in any appreciable degree."⁹ This, at least, grants something; but, in my opinion, not enough.

B—There has often been reference to Caesar's belief in his own particularly favorable Fortuna: "For [Caesar], like Sulla, with a robust confidence in his own good luck, was ever a believer in the 'chapter of accidents' deified under the name of Fortune."¹⁰ This is a conservative statement of a view, which has been popularly held, that Caesar believed Fortuna had a special regard for his destiny. Against this theory Fowler brings a vigorous attack.¹¹ His method of refuting the idea is to show that Fortuna does not appear oftener in the pages of Caesar's writings or more vividly than in those of many others of Caesar's contemporaries. Yet it seems likely on the face of things that the Emperor did not actually oppose the faith in the goddess, especially when we remember the general interest of all the Caesars in Fortuna. Augustus seems to have questioned the oracle at Antium in

⁷ Roscher, 1537-9 ff. and Plutarch (*de Fort. Rom.*) Τύχη Εὐέλπης.

⁸ ll. 21. ff. "Thee Hope waits on and Faith so rare, clad in white garments." *Ibid.* Cf. D'Alton, p. 112, "[Horace] apparently caught up some of the ideas floating in the Roman world of his day."

⁹ Axtell, 98.

¹⁰ Heitland, *Roman Republic*, iii, 336, §1260.

¹¹ The case with full statements of both sides is to be found in Fowler, "Caesar's Conception of Fortune," *Classical Review*, xvii (1903), p. 153.

26 B. C.¹² And she was considered the tutelary goddess of the emperors.¹³ In spite of his appealing argument, it is difficult for Professor Fowler actually to disprove the belief,¹⁴ and after all the Emperor is certainly not representative of the mass of Roman people.

C—The original conceptions of the goddess may be summarized as follows:

(1) Moon goddess, closely related to Isis: "So ist es mir nicht zweifelhaft, dass wir in ihr ebenso wie in der Nemesis wieder eine Mondgöttin zu erkennen haben, die in ihren wechselnden Phasen das Leben, wie das Geschick der Natur und des Menschen brachte, leitete und zugleich darstellte," Gilbert, II, 389, n. 3. See also Zoëga, *Abhandlungen*, pp. 37 ff; Curtius, *Althertum u. Gegenwart*, II, pp. 70-71.

(2) The sun goddess, the giver of life: Gaidoz (1886), pp. 56 ff. Cf. Müller on the etymology of the word Fortuna, with discussion in Fowler, *Rom. Fest.*, pp. 164-6: "goddess of the dawn"—Sanskrit HAER. See also, Dill, pp. 617-18, who brings Fortuna from Assyria and Persia.

(3) A Roman representative of Isis: Roscher, 1530 ff.; 1549 ff.; (Isidis=Isi tyches. Τύχη is therefore directly related. Cumont, p. 89.) Zoëga, *Abhandlungen*, pp. 37 ff. Cf. Dill's summary of Isis, (pp. 564-572,) with Carter's summary of Fortuna (*Relig. Numa*, p. 51).

(4) A Roman representative of the Etruscan goddess Nortia, who is supposed to be related to the Germanic Norns. See Fowler, *Rom. Fest.*, pp. 171 ff.; Peter (Roscher, 1549). In Etruscan Ferentinum a goddess was honored, says Peter, who was identified with Salus or Fortuna; he quotes Tacitus, *Ann.* 15, 53. See also Fowler, *Relig. Exper.*, p. 284; Axtell, p. 9; Wissowa, *Real-Encyc.*, 16; Daremberg-Saglio, 1271 ff. An argument in favor of this view is that Servius Tullius, who is supposed to have introduced the cult to Rome, was probably an Etruscan. See Wissowa, *Real-Encyc.*, 16-17. (Though Plutarch says Ancus

¹² Roscher, 1548. See also Roscher, 1526, and Plutarch, *de Fort. Rom.*, 6 f.

¹³ Roscher, 1521 ff.; F. Augusta, 1524 ff. For a further statement regarding Caesar, see Fowler, *Roman Ideas of Deity*, pp. 74 ff.

¹⁴ See, e. g., Caesar, *Bello Gallico*, VI, xxx; *Bello Civili*, III, lxxviii.

Martius was the first,—*de Fort. Rom.* 5,—Peter suggests that this passage is an interpolation: Roscher 1508-9).

(5) The Fortuna of horticulture:

Wissowa, *R. K.*, pp. 256 ff. He refers to the Fors Fortuna of Consul Sp. Carvilius, whose feast-day was at the end of the harvest. For an opposing view see Fowler, *Relig. Exper.*, p. 245, note 30. Cf. Fowler, *Roman Ideas of Deity*, p. 64; Axtell, p. 9; Columella, *de Cultu Hort.*, X, 311.

(6) General discussion:

Wissowa, *R. K.*, p. 257, considers her also a goddess of women. See Fowler, *Roman Ideas of Deity*, pp. 64 ff. Cf. F. Muliebris. Fowler, *Relig. Exper.*, p. 235, says: "She was also very probably a deity of other kinds of fertility." See Carter, *Relig. Numa*, p. 51. An investigation of her cognomina leads Carter to the following opinion: "Summing up, we may say that *functional* cognomina are practically lacking in the case of Fortuna, and that her cognomina are employed principally to limit and thus emphasize her protecting activity in point of time, place, or person"; Carter, *A. P. A. T.*, 1900, XXXI, p. 68. See also Carter, *De Deor. R. Cogn.*, p. 29. See in general, Fowler, *Rom. Fest.*, pp. 166 ff. Gaidoz (p. 57) cites Wieseler, *de Scala*, as conjecturing that F. came from an Asiatic Venus. For F. as "goddess of time" see Fowler *Rom. Fest.*, 172.

One need not restrict Fortuna to any one of these possible sources. Many influences may play on a conception. Fowler, *Rom. Fest.*, p. 168, says in ridicule: "Fortuna has not only been conjectured to be a deity of the dawn; she has been made out to be both a moon goddess and a sun goddess." But why must we limit her even to these three? The cult near Etruria would be subject to Etruscan influence; the cult near a seaport, to the influence of Isis. See the discussion of the relation to the Mater Matuta (Roscher, 1511) because the temple in the forum boarium was next to that of the Mater Matuta and their feast days were the same. See Wissowa, *Real-Encyc.*, 19-20; Gilbert, p. 390, and n. 3.

D—The cults of Fortuna at or before the time of the Empire include the following:¹⁵

¹⁵ See Roscher, 1508 ff.; Wissowa, *Real-Encyc.*, 16 ff., who includes *F. immoderata in bono aequae atque in mala*, 30; Carter, *A. P. A. T.*, xxxi, pp. 63 ff.

- (1) Servius Tullius.¹⁶
- (2) Fortuna Bona.
- (3) F. Obsequens.
- (4) F. Felix.
- (5) F. Respiciens.
- (6) F. Mala.
- (7) F. Manens.
- (8) F. Huiusce Diei.
- (9) F. Viscata.
- (10) F. Populi Romani.
- (11) F. Publica.
- (12) F. Publica Populi Romani Quiritium Primigenia.¹⁷
- (13) F. Privata.
- (14) F. Virilis.
- (15) F. Barbata.
- (16) F. Virgo.
- (17) F. Muliebris.
- (18) F. Mammosa.
- (19) F. Equestris.
- (20) F. Conservatrix.
- (21) F. Domestica.
- (22) F. Balnearis.
- (23) F. Salutaris.
- (24) F. Augusta.
- (25) F. Redux.
- (26) F. Dux.
- (27) Isis-Fortuna.
- (28) F.-Panthea.¹⁸

¹⁶ See also *Τύχη Ἀποτρόπαιος* mentioned by Plutarch, Roscher, 1513.

¹⁷ The neighborhood of the three temples for this and the preceding two cults was called "Ad Tres Fortunas," Wissowa *R. K.*, p. 261.

¹⁸ There were, of course, the individual cults of the families. And there were titles which are not to be taken as cult-names: F. Regina, Caelestis, Supera, Sancta, Magna, Casualis, Diva, etc. See Roscher, 1515. And one ought not to forget also the cults at Antium and Praeneste.

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1784

Smith College Studies in Modern Languages

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THE TRADITION OF THE GODDESS FORTUNA IN MEDIEVAL PHILOSOPHY AND LITERATURE

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NORTHAMPTON, MASS.
SMITH COLLEGE

PARIS
LIBRAIRIE E. CHAMPION

Published Quarterly by the
Departments of Modern Languages of Smith College

The Collegiate Press
GEORGE BANTA PUBLISHING COMPANY
MENASHA, WISCONSIN

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The Tradition of the Goddess Fortuna 179.

IN MEDIEVAL PHILOSOPHY AND LITERATURE

CHAPTER III

THE PHILOSOPHY OF FORTUNE TO THE TIME OF DANTE

The strength of the general cult of Fortuna in Rome and its survival in the form of at least an intellectual conception in the Middle Ages offered a serious problem to the early Christian Church. By the time of the last records of the Roman cults, it is no longer a question of outward worship, and no one pretends that any secret devotion was maintained. But the Church had to fight the mere belief as it seems to have existed in the popular mind. The fact that the Church actually took up the question, is in itself significant.

It is my intention in the present essay¹ to follow the course of the development whereby the pagan idea was altered to conform with Christian philosophy, in that familiar and remarkable process by which the Church Fathers "brought all intellectual interests into the closure of the Christian Faith, or discredited whatever stubbornly remained without."² It was possible simply to annihilate the goddess; and that some of the philosophers were content to do, following the pagan remedies to what is really their logical conclusion. For if the goddess is powerless when confronted by proper fortitude, prudence, or devotion to spiritual affairs, her rule in the universe is at least limited, and may be practically non-existent. But not everybody would be satisfied with a plain denial of what so ostentatiously asserts its presence in everyday life, namely the element of chance. For those who saw the effect of this principle more clearly than they could imagine a rational explanation of its cause, another remedy was necessary; and this was supplied by the poet, basing his figure, however, on the scheme provided by the philosophers. In studying the tradition of Fortuna in vernacular literature, I shall here limit my field to the Italian writers, as affording a sufficiently typical development.³

From the Church Fathers and the early writers come three important methods of dealing with the problem of popular faith

¹ As a continuation of the study in the April issue of this series.

² Taylor, *Mediaeval Mind*, I, p. 65, concerning the work of St. Augustine.

³ I hope to study elsewhere the tradition in other fields.

in Fortuna:⁴ (1) the annihilation of the goddess, (2) the Christian compromise, (3) the Christian conception. I shall study these in order, with some necessary sacrifice of chronology.

I

The Annihilation of Fortuna

LACTANTIUS

Lactantius, in the third and fourth centuries, observes with condemnation the popularity of the belief:

Non dissimili errore credunt esse fortunam, quasi deam quamdam res humanas variis casibus illudentem; quia nesciunt, unde sibi bona, et mala eveniant. Cum hac se compositos ad praeliandum putant; nec ullam tamen rationem reddunt, a quo et quam ob causam: sed tantum cum fortuna se digladiari momentis omnibus gloriantur. Jam quicumque aliquos consolati sunt ob interitum amissionemque charorum, fortunae nomen acerrimis accusationibus proscederunt; nec omnino ulla eorum disputatio de virtute est, in qua non fortuna vexetur.⁵

Some people find it necessary to employ all too frequently in speech the conception embodied in Fortuna, and for such the rebuke of Lactantius is that the worship of the goddess is contrary to reason. He fails to go into the problem very deeply:

Fortuna ergo per se nihil est; nec sic habendum est, tamquam sit in aliquo sensu. Siquidem fortuna est accidentium rerum subitus atque inopinatus eventus.⁶

He himself cannot but feel that the universe is founded on reason, and so he argues that Fortuna is impossible in a rational cosmos:

Cur, si dea sit, hominibus invidet, eosque perditos cupiat, cum ab his religiose colatur: cur aequior sit malis, iniquior autem bonis: cur insidietur, affligat, decipiat et exterminet: quis illam generi hominum vexatricem perpetuam constituerit: cur denique tam malam sortita sit potestatem, ut res cunctas 'ex libidine magis, quam ex vero celebret, obscureturque?'

Of course the whimsical deity is incomprehensible to the man who assumes a rational basis for the universe. This attitude toward

⁴ Graf gives valuable hints for this classification in his *Miti, Leggende e Superstizioni*, I, p. 273.

⁵ *De Falsa Sapientia Philosophorum*, III, xxviii (Migne, VI, 437-8).

⁶ III, xxix (*ibid.* 440).

⁷ *Ibid.* 442. Note the line from Sallust, which is also quoted by St. Augustine, (*De Civ. Dei*, VII, iii).

the goddess is a use of the pagan remedy of prudence carried to the point of annihilation.⁸

Lactantius adds a new idea, however,—that men knew of an evil power, adverse to God, and called that Fortuna:

Hujus itaque perversae potestatis cum vim sentirent virtuti repugnantem, nomenque ignorarent, fortunae vocabulum sibi inane finxerunt.⁹

Such an identification of Fortune with the evil power is in a way another attempt to retain the goddess, if slightly humbled in position. This demonic conception is rather poetic, and special credit for it might be given to Lactantius; but it seems to be only his scornful interpretation of a current, if not wide-spread, heresy.

ST. AUGUSTINE

St. Augustine (of the fourth and fifth centuries) corrects the judgment of Varro in not placing Fortuna among the *dii selecti*:

Saltem inter illos, vel potius prae illis Fortuna poneretur, quam dicunt deam non rationabili dispositione, sed, ut temere acciderit, sua cuique dona conferre. Haec in diis selectis tenere apicem debuit, in quibus maxime quid posset ostendit.¹⁰

This is ironical, of course. Augustine's real solution is that all the gods and goddesses represent only different functions and powers of the one god:

Si non pudet, haec omnia quae dixi, et quaecumque non dixi (non enim omnia dicenda arbitratus sum), hi omnes dii deaque sit unus Jupiter: sive sint, ut quidam volunt, omnia ista partes ejus, sive virtutes ejus, sicut eis videtur, quibus eum placet esse mundi animum; quae sententia velut magnorum multumque doctorum est.¹¹

He then discusses the theory of those who suggest that Fortuna occasionally rewards merit:

Aut si aliquid proficiunt cultores ejus, ut ab illa videantur et amentur, jam merita sequitur, non fortuito venit. Ubi est ergo definitio illa fortunae? ubi est quod a fortuitis etiam nomen accepit? Nihil enim prodest eam colere, si fortuna est. Si autem suos cultores discernit, ut prosit, fortuna non est. An et ipsam, quo voluerit, Jupiter mittit? Colatur ergo ipse solus: non enim potest ei jubenti et

⁸ See, e.g., the heading to II, viii, "De rationis usu in religione" (Migne, VI, 287), and that to III, xxviii, "De vera religione, deque natura; fortuna num sit dea; et de philosophia" (*ibid.* 436).

⁹ III, xxix (*ibid.* 443).

¹⁰ *De Civ. Dei*, VII, iii, (Migne, XLI, 196-7).

¹¹ IV, xi, (*ibid.* 122).

eam quo voluerit mittenti Fortuna resistere. Aut certe istam mali colant, qui nolunt habere merita, quibus possit Dea Felicitas invitari.¹²

This remarkable passage approaches and forbids the later Christian treatment of Fortune, which subordinates Fortuna to God. The best Augustine can do for her is ironically to allow her a place as a demon:

An forte quando mala est, dea non est, sed in malignum daemonem repente convertitur?¹³

Yet Augustine goes a step farther than his predecessors. He relates the problem of Fortuna and the element of chance to the question of fate and free-will. If, as it must be, all is ordained by God's providence (for, if God has foresight, all must be fore-ordained), there is no allowance for man's free-will. For the sake of that, there must be the element of chance in the universe. Complete divine foreordination would mean complete fatalism. St. Augustine argues that divine providence does not affect the freedom of man to choose between sin and righteousness:

Alii enim nullam divinam providentiam praeesse rebus humanis libenter opinantur, dumque fortuitis committunt casibus et animos et corpora sua, tradunt se feriendos et dilaniandos libidinibus, divina iudicia negantes, humana fallentes, eos a quibus accusantur, fortunae patrocinio propulsare se putant; quam tamen caecam effingere ac pingere consueverunt, ut aut meliores ea sint a qua se regi arbitrantur, aut se quoque cum eadem caecitate et sentire ista fateantur et dicere.¹⁴

He says (and, in saying it, accomplishes the complete philosophical annihilation of Fortuna) what St. Thomas is to develop further from Aristotle:

Sed aut fortuna intelligenda est pro his rebus quae fortuito videntur accidere, non quia numen aliquod sit, cum haec ipsa tamen quae fortuita videntur, causis occultis divinitus dentur.¹⁵

For the dwelling-place of mankind, instead of the city of Rome with its pagan temples and deities, Augustine conceived a new city, the great *City of God*. A fourteenth-century manuscript of his work has, at the beginning of the fifth book, the drawing of a "Wheel of Providence."¹⁶

¹² IV, xviii (*ibid.* 126).

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *De Libero Arbitrio*, III, ii (headed "Dei praescientia quomodo liberam voluntatem peccantibus non auferat, quaestio plurimos torquens"), Migne, XXXII, 1273.

¹⁵ *Quaest. in Hept.*, I, xci, (Migne, XXXIV, 571).

¹⁶ See the MS. of Amiens, n. 216, Weinhold's *Glücksrad und Lebensrad*, p. 15; Didron, *Annales Archéol.*, I, 433 ff., and cf. Didron's *Icon. Chrét. Hist. de Dieu*, p. 119.

ST. JEROME

St. Jerome (also of the fourth and fifth centuries) declares positively for the annihilation of the goddess:

Ego autem mecum diligenter retractans, invenio non, ut quidam male aestimant, omnia fortuito geri, et variam in rebus humanis fortunam ludere, sed cuncta iudicio Dei fieri.¹⁷

A large part of Jerome's work for the Church was spent on his great commentary on the Bible. In the Vulgate text there is one reference to Fortuna (*Isaiah*, 65: 11): "Et vos, qui dereliquistis Dominum, qui obliti estis montem sanctum meum, qui ponitis Fortunae mensam, et libatis super eam."¹⁸

Juxta tropologiam autem hoc dicendum est, quod omnes qui Ecclesiam deserunt et obliviscuntur montem sanctum Dei, et se tradunt spiritibus erroris, et doctrinis daemoniorum, isti parant fortunae mensam, nihil ad Deum pertinere credentes, sed vel stellarum cursu, vel varietate fortunae omnia gubernari: quos Paulus increpat, dicens: *Non potestis mensae Domini participare, et mensae daemoniorum. Non potestis calicem Domini bibere, et calicem daemoniorum* (1 Cor. x, 20, 21): quia aeternis tradentur suppliciis, ita ut nullus eorum caedem et ruinam possit evadere.¹⁹

This passage again recalls the observation of Lactantius and his demonic conception; but the idea is rather more fully developed in Jerome. The people of the Middle Ages thought that the pagans prayed to devils, and as late as the twelfth century we find William of Malmesbury believing that the Saracens and Turks worshipped Fortune: "Vindelici vero Fortunam adorant; cujus idolum loco nominatissimo ponentes, cornu dextrae illius componunt plenum potu illo quem Graeco vocabulo, ex aqua et melle, Hydromellum vocamus."²⁰

¹⁷ *Opera*, III, 461 (Migne, XXIII, 1083).

¹⁸ Authorized version, 1611: "But yee are they that forsake the LORD, that forget my holy mountaine, that prepare a table for that troope [Heb. "Gad"], and that furnish the drinke offering unto that number" [Heb. "Meni"]. Revised version (Oxford, 1885): "But ye that forsake the Lord, that forget my holy mountain, that prepare a table for Fortune, and that fill up mingled wine unto Destiny." Tercentenary version (Oxford, 1911): "But ye *are* they that forsake the Lord, that forget my holy mountain, that prepare a table for *the god of* Fortune, and that fill the drink offering for Destiny."

¹⁹ St. Jerome, *Opera*, IV, 783 (Migne, XXIV, 639).

²⁰ *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, lib. II, §189, (Rolls Series, I, 230).

ST. THOMAS AQUINAS

Whatever were the dangers from such or any other heresy concerning Fortuna, Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth century attempted to put a definite period to them in his commentary on the Aristotelian philosophy of $\tau\upsilon\chi\eta$. He takes up the question from the most liberal, and at the same time the most intellectual, point of view and answers it.

The Aristotelian doctrine in the excerpts quoted by St. Thomas, which he translates and upon which he comments, is roughly as follows:²¹

(1) People say that there are causes for everything; that chance cannot exist; and so that there is no place for Fortune in the universal scheme.

(2) Fortune is not mentioned by the ancient philosophers; they assume causes to explain all phenomena.

(3) Plant life and human vitality do not come by chance, but by nature. (This suggests a definition of nature for us, including the control of "outer nature" and man's physical self.)²²

(4) Granted that all things must have a cause, there are two kinds of causes—*causa per se*, *causa per accidens*.

(5) "Et sic patet quod fortuna est causa per accidens eorum quae sunt propter aliquid."²³

(6) "Fortuna est *causa per accidens in his quae fiunt secundum propositum propter finem in minori parte*. Et ex hoc patet quod fortuna et intellectus sunt circa idem: quia his tantum convenit agere a fortuna, quae habent intellectum."²⁴ This passage implies the necessity of human intention and free-will if Fortuna is to have an opportunity for action.

(7) Fortuna is beyond the reach of human reason, because man can reason only concerning the usual and the frequent.²⁵ She would seem reasonable if we could collect enough similar instances of what she does.

²¹ See his *Commentaria Physicorum Aristotelis*, (*Opera*, ed. Pope Leo XIII, vol. II, pp. 76 ff.

²² *Ibid.* p. 77 (7): "Quarum prima est quod admiratione dignum videtur quod animalia et plantae non fiunt a fortuna, sed ab intellectu vel natura, vel a quacumque alia causa determinata."

²³ *Ibid.* 80 (9).

²⁴ *Ibid.* 80 (10). See also 86 (12).

²⁵ *Ibid.* 82 (4).

(8) Good and bad fortune depend merely on the way fortune suits individual taste and desire.²⁶

(9) Chance differs from fortune in that chance governs the inanimate or not-willing; fortune only the animate creature, which is furnished with elective consciousness.²⁷

(10) Chance and fortune are obviously not in control of the disposition of the heavens, because chance and fortune can be only secondary causes, being *causae per accidens*.²⁸ One illustration of the operation of Fortune is the story of a man going to town and unexpectedly receiving a treasure there. The man intends to go to town, but his intention and his journey are not causes of his coming upon the treasure except accidentally.²⁹

My brief résumé of the Aristotelian discussion may be reduced to just this:—Aristotle observes the “hidden causes” of the universe, their vast number, and the impossibility of explaining them; for these he finds the expression “fortuna” convenient; and he attempts an explanation of the process of these causes defining them as *causae per accidens*.³⁰ The logical difficulty involved in defining a hidden cause by the term “fortuna,” which implies no cause at all, was bound to make the discussion unsatisfactory to one who heard the term used on every side with its pagan meaning.

St. Thomas at least does not accept the Aristotelian solution. His comments are as follows: Some people say that there is a cause, not manifest to the human intellect, and that that cause is Fortuna:

Sed quamvis haec opinio habeat veram radicem, non tamen bene usi sunt nomine fortunae. Illud enim divinum ordinans non potest dici vel nominari fortuna; quia secundum quod aliquid participat rationem vel ordinem, recedit a ratione fortunae. Unde magis debet dici fortuna causa inferior, quae de se non habet ordinem ad eventum fortuitum, quam causa superior, si qua sit ordinans. Praetermittit tamen inquisitionem huius opinionis, tum quia excedit metas scientiae naturalis, tum quia infra manifestat quod fortuna non est causa per se, sed per accidens.³¹

²⁶ *Ibid.* 82 (6).

²⁷ *Ibid.* 84 (Cap. VI, lect. x).

²⁸ *Ibid.* 84 ff.

²⁹ *Ibid.* 80 (9).

³⁰ κατὰ συμβεβηκός.

³¹ *Ibid.* 77 (9).

And again:

Considerandum est autem quod si ea quae fortuito vel casualiter accidunt, idest praeter intentionem causarum inferiorum, reducantur in aliquam causam superiorem ordinantem ipsa; in comparatione ad illam causam non possunt dici fortuita vel casalia: unde illa causa superior non potest dici fortuna.³²

And so St. Thomas rejects Fortuna utterly. This is a sublime use of the remedy of prudence when Thomas Aquinas thus comments on Aristotle.

To see any possible effect of the exertions of the Church so far, let us turn to literature. What vitality appears in the contemporary literary treatment? We know by our previous study that the pagan Fortuna did persist in literature, and we have seen that the passages become fuller and richer in the Middle Ages. As I have said earlier, the Church thus far only carries the pagan remedy to its logical conclusion. What is the effect?

HILDEBERT OF LAVARDIN

Hildebert of Lavardin,³³ Bishop of Le Mans and Tours, gives vent to his grievances at the hands of Fortuna in his *De Exsilio Suo*. He had much cause for complaint against William Rufus of England, but in this poem he blames the capricious Goddess in a manner which has already become traditional:

Recently I was in happy circumstances, and everything was prosperous. I had many friends. I wondered at thee, Fortuna, that thou, who art wont to be so fickle, wast stable and constant. I said, whence comes this prosperity? Constancy is not a trait of human affairs.

Has ludit fortuna vices, regesque superbos,
Aut servos humiles non sinit esse diu.
Illa dolosa comes, sola levitate fidelis,
Non impune favet, aut sine fine premit.
Illa mihi quondam risu blandita sereno
Mutavit vultus, nubila facta, suos.
Et velut aeternam misero conata ruinam,
Spem quoque laetitiae detrahit illa mihi.

She reduced and destroyed all that belonged to me. The consul ruined me; with fickleness of favor like Fortuna's, he exiled me:

Inde ratem scando, vitam committo procellis,
Uda [*f. vela*] tument, gemina cymba juvatur ope.
Portus erat longe, cum ventus fortior aestum
Movit, et in tumultos Auster aravit aquas.

(And so Hildebert uses vividly the figure of the sea and Fortuna Redux.)

³² *Ibid.* 86 (13).

³³ *c.* 1055-1133.

At this point the tone of the poem changes. Hildebert reflects that God is really the governor of the world, and only He is responsible for all this. What is Fortuna anyway?

Jus illis Deus ascribit, statuitque teneri
Legibus, et nutu stare vel ire suo.
Ille simul semel et solus praevidit, et egit
Cuncta, nec illa aliter vidit, agitique aliter.

As for the rest:

Si fas est credi te quidquam posse vel esse,
O fortuna! quid es? quod potes ipse dedit.
Pace tua, fortuna, loquar; blandire, minare,
Nil tamen unde querar, aut bene laeter ages.
Ille potens, mitis tenor et concordia rerum,
Quidquid vult in me digerat, ejus ero.³⁴

ALANUS DE INSULIS

Another ecclesiastic to bring Fortuna into his discussion (but with considerably more prominence) is Alanus de Insulis, of the twelfth century. Superficially Alanus preserves the pagan conception. His views on the structure of the universe seem to be suggested in the following lines:

Nec mundum ratione regi, sed ab impete verti
Fortunae, varioque angi mortalia casu.³⁵

The best remedy he can offer is merely that of fortitude:

Si tibi inimicatur fortuna, propter ejus inimicitias, dolorem non augeas; non habet quid in te laedat, nisi ei vires praebeas.³⁶

The *Anticlaudianus* describes Nature's attempts to form a perfect human being, to which process God gives his consent. Among other endowments nobility is necessary. Nobilitas, daughter of Fortune, would freely give her gifts; but she has no power except what she derives from her mother, and she makes haste to visit her mother's house. An elaborate description of the house follows. Of this it will suffice at present to say that it is situated "in the midst of the sea, on a cliff which the water lashes continually, and with which the wave has strife." The cliff is

³⁴ *Carmina Miscellanea*, LXXV, (Migne CLXXI, 1418-20). Reprinted by Jakob Werner, *Beiträge zur Kunde der lateinischen Literatur*, 1905, pp. 95-7; quoted by Vincent of Beauvais, *Speculum Historiale*, lib. XXV, cap. cix; discussed by Hauréau, *Les Mélanges Poétiques d'Hildebert de Lavardin*, Paris, 1882, no. xlii.

³⁵ *Anticlaudianus*, lib. IX, cap. ix. (Migne, CCX, 575).

³⁶ *Summa de Arte Praedicatoria*, cap. xiii (Migne, CCX, 137).

now hidden by the waves, now rises to the upper air. It suffers continual changes of climate. There are trees of barren and of fruitful branches, and thorn-thickets armed with darts. There are two streams, one pleasant, the other exceedingly disagreeable. Part of Fortune's house seems about to fall. It is blown by the winds. Fortune herself is in difficulties: "Uneven of gait, changing, retrograde, roving, while going forward she goes back much. In her progress she is both swift and slow. Now in better gown, she is radiant; now in poorer garb she is abased and becomes one of the throng; now reft of raiment, she is exposed. She seems to mourn her ancient glories." Nobility explains to her mother the reason for coming and asks her for "anything glorious, any comely work of virtue." Fortune replies: "The act of Nature, the fashion of virtue, requires no work of ours; such a work of God needs not our action, a work composed of so many gifts of heaven, and lacking no glory of virtue. What power will chance have, when naught is ruled by chance? What power my fickleness, where Constancy doth keep? . . . Her gold needeth no iron. The work of virtue hath no need of me." Yet she brings gifts. She will try to conquer her bad habit of fickleness in this particular case. She will lay aside her deceit. Reason stands beside her as she gives, to allow no inconstancy, and "compels Fortune to deceive herself, takes away Fortune from herself and makes the false to be true, the untrustworthy faithful, the wavering constant, the blind seeing, and for a time compels her wandering to stay."³⁷

In this account of the work of Fortune, the goddess is discussed in connection with two important topics. (1) We have the old opposition of Reason and Fortune. Fortune's gifts are not of the same quality as those of the other goddesses and she is somewhat degraded.³⁸ (2) We have one solution of the question of Nobility's origin, a subject of great debate in the Middle Ages.³⁹ Nobility of a certain kind, at any rate, comes from the gifts of Fortune. These two points suggest that the author had

³⁷ *Anticlaudianus*, lib. VII, cap. viii ff. (Migne, CCX, 557-62). Later imitations of this description I hope to discuss elsewhere.

³⁸ See lib. VIII, cap. ii (Migne, CCX, 561).

³⁹ See, for example, Dante's *Convivio*, Canzone Terza; Chaucer's *Wife of Bath's Tale*, 261 ("Crist wol, we clayme of him our gentillesse"); Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, IV, 2204 ff.

in mind less the goddess of pure chance than the goddess who bestowed worldly gifts.

But is this a satisfactory clue to the apparent contradiction in Fortuna's position? At one moment we are told that Reason stands beside her as she gives, to allow no inconstancy; here the goddess of chance may still be uppermost. But Reason also "takes away Fortune from herself and makes the false to be true." Here apparently Alanus has achieved the impossible and for a moment stopped the wheel of Fortune; for when Fortuna ceases to be fickle, we remember, she ceases to be Fortuna.⁴⁰ But some figure certainly remains in the person of her who has granted the worldly gifts. Are we to understand that the goddess of mundane glory was once, and is no longer, Fortuna? What is the meaning of such metamorphosis? Is it merely a successful application of the pagan remedy of prudence? A better solution is to be found in the possibility that Alanus did not have the goddess in mind at all, but intended merely a personification of the abstract idea of mundane possessions. In that case the change is quite consistent: worldly glories are inconstant, but may become trustworthy by a special dispensation of the gods, or by a proper use of the intellect (Reason) in dealing with them.

In the *Anticlaudianus*, the confusion of goddess and abstraction originated a unique conception and established one important symbolic attribute of Fortuna—her dwelling-place. What is the idea that gave rise to the allegory of Nobilitas, daughter of Fortuna? The literal meaning of the allegory is just this: nobility comes from worldly possessions; riches and honor create worldly nobility. In other words, Fortuna here is not the giver but the gifts themselves—"fortune." Such fortune is difficult to attain,—a rock surrounded by a stormy sea; it is sometimes greater and sometimes less,—the rock is submerged or emerges from the sea (the figure of the trees is typical too, where however the symbolic element is introduced if the plucking of the fruit enters into the idea). Wealth and honor fluctuate (a man is sometimes poor and sometimes rich); Fortuna goes forward and backward, she is now in poor raiment now in rich. In Alanus, Fortuna herself suffers; the absolute goddess can never suffer what she inflicts.

⁴⁰ Cf. St. Augustine, p. 181 above, and Boethius, p. 191 below.

The incongruous picture of Fortuna itself is not so much at fault as the fact that it refuses the smooth visualization of a deity living a possible course of life anywhere.⁴¹ The allegorical method is broken. If Fortuna is in complete control of her gifts, who is responsible for her own occasionally unhappy condition? Somehow the author's own idea of her has been altered. For Alanus, God is in His heaven, and the other figures are subservient to Him; but Fortuna, the Goddess, is really non-existent.

II

The Compromise

BOETHIUS

Boethius (of the fifth and sixth centuries) and even Albertus Magnus (of the thirteenth century) fall chronologically before St. Thomas Aquinas, but they represent the roots of a growth flowering later than his work.

Boethius, as a philosopher, employs the remedy of prudence against Fortuna. His is the great debate of Reason and Fortune. But, as a poet, he lays the foundation for a treatment still higher, and in every way his work is remarkable. As one of the Latin "transmitters of antique and patristic thought,"⁴² he combines the detail of the Classical treatment of Fortune with a richness of theme and style which are striking in themselves for so early a date, and which contain the promise of practically every theme and formula that were used down through the Middle Ages.

The plot of the *Consolation of Philosophy* is familiar enough. The author, imprisoned without guilt, has a vision of the lady Philosophy, to whom he rails against the unreasonableness of fortune. Philosophy discourses on the ways in which he can accept Fortuna, and in so doing touches on the three great methods. She represents Fortuna as personally appearing to him and defending herself.⁴³ There is a description,⁴⁴ an apostrophe to the ruler

⁴¹ Cf., for example, the picture of the varying height of Philosophy in Boethius, *De Cons. Philos.*, I, pr. i, where Philosophy is a mixture of type and symbol. There is no possible idea that Boethius believed in her as an existing spirit. Cf. the discussion of the idea as it appears in Homer: Neilson, *Court of Love*, pp. 9 ff.

⁴² Taylor, *Mediaeval Mind*, I, 88 ff.

⁴³ Lib. II, pr. ii.

⁴⁴ I, pr. i.

of the universe,⁴⁵ and the complaint,⁴⁶ and we have the tragic theme, the theme of the "friend in need," that of "sorrow's crown of sorrows," and many others.⁴⁷ The influence of Boethius on the Middle Ages can hardly receive full estimate; it cannot be adequately described here, but I hope that this study will be valuable at least in giving hints for a more complete discussion.⁴⁸

(a) The general impression one might carry away from reading Boethius is that of the purely pagan Fortuna:⁴⁹

(1) He speaks of Fortune's fickle bounty.⁵⁰ He complains that her "fickle hand" deals out changing lots.⁵¹ Philosophy asks him if he thinks that the universe is guided only by mere chance⁵² and that fortune is allotted by no ruling hand.⁵³

(2) Philosophy herself describes Fortuna: "Eo usque cum his quos eludere nititur blandissimam familiaritatem, dum intolerabili dolore confundat quos insperata reliquerit."⁵⁴ Again: "Tu fortunam putas erga te esse mutatum: erras. Hi semper eius mores sunt ista natura. Servavit circa te propriam potius in ipsa sui mutabilitate constantiam. Talis erat, cum blandiebatur, cum tibi falsae inlecebris felicitatis alluderet. Deprehendisti caeci numinis ambiguos vultus. Quae sese adhuc velat aliis, tota tibi prorsus innotuit. Si probas, utere moribus, ne queras."⁵⁵

(3) Philosophy says: "Fortunae te regendum dedisti, dominae moribus oportet obtemperes. Tu vero volventis rotae impetum retinere conaris? At omnium mortalium stolidissime, si manere incipit, fors esse desistit."⁵⁶

(4) Fortuna was his nurse.⁵⁷ Wealth and honors are her handmaids.⁵⁸ To spin her wheel is her unchanging sport.⁵⁹ Perseus and Croesus are overturned

⁴⁵ I, met. v.

⁴⁶ I, pr. iv.

⁴⁷ In this study it is impossible to trace the use of all these motifs in the different writers. Their use is remarkably constant.

⁴⁸ Here it is only necessary to recall the translation of Alfred (849-901); the treatment of Tanzo, Domenichi, Bartoli, and Varchi in Italian (sixteenth century); the commentary, by Thomas Aquinas and Badius Ascensius (c. 1510); the translations of Jean de Meun and others in Old French, and of Chaucer, Colville (1556), and Queen Elizabeth (1593, see the edition by Miss Caroline Pemberton, 1899), in English. See list in *Encyc. Brit.*

⁴⁹ See, e.g., Nitzsch, *Das System des Boethius*, Berlin, 1860, pp. 66 ff.

⁵⁰ I, met. i, line 17: "Dum levibus male fida bonis fortuna faveret."

⁵¹ I, met. v, ll. 28-9.

⁵² I, pr. vi, ll. 5 ff.

⁵³ I, pr. vi, ll. 43 ff.

⁵⁴ II, pr. i, ll. 6-9.

⁵⁵ II, pr. i, ll. 26-33.

⁵⁶ II, pr. i, ll. 55-8.

⁵⁷ II, pr. ii, ll. 8-10.

⁵⁸ II, pr. ii, ll. 16-17.

⁵⁹ II, pr. ii, ll. 27 ff.

by her random blow.⁶⁰ She looks on man with a favouring and then with a grudging eye.⁶¹

(5) Philosophy's remedy is to bear with equal mind the yoke of Fortune.⁶² If Boethius masters himself, he will be in possession of what Fortuna cannot take away,—himself.⁶³ At last Philosophy says: "Postremo idem de total concludere fortuna licet in qua nihil expetendum nihil nativae bonitatis inesse manifestum est, quae nec se bonis semper adjungit et bonos quibus fuerit adiuncta non efficit."⁶⁴ These are the "fomenta rationum,"⁶⁵ which Philosophy offers to him, with, it will be observed, a touch of the spiritual remedy.

(b) The next step in Boethius is to reconcile this conception with Christianity. The only consistent reconciliation of this portrait of Fortuna with Christian doctrine would be to consider her an evil power (for there is no good in her whatsoever), or else to drop her entirely as allegorical. But, while Boethius is philosophically consistent,⁶⁶ he is not consistent in his portraiture of Fortune. He has three distinct pictures.

The best practical remedy Philosophy can give for the pagan Fortuna is to say, "Bear the yoke of Fortune," and then, "Quid si haec ipsa mei mutabilitas iusta tibi causa est sperandi meliora?"⁶⁷—another way of saying, "Patience!" She then discourses at length on the gifts of fortune and the truly valuable gifts. She identifies real good with God. Fortuna has no part in the truly worthwhile.⁶⁸ Wealth and honors and fame are not enduringly valuable.⁶⁹ But God is the creator of all things, and what seems like the element of chance is only the motion and change on the rim of the great wheel of which God is the center.⁷⁰ How then did

⁶⁰ II, pr. ii, ll. 32 ff.

⁶¹ II, pr. iii, ll. 36-7.

⁶² II, pr. i, ll. 46-8.

⁶³ II, pr. iv, ll. 70-72.

⁶⁴ II, pr. vi, ll. 63-6.

⁶⁵ II, pr. v, l. 1.

⁶⁶ See E. K. Rand, in *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, (1904), XV, 8, 10, 20.

⁶⁷ II, pr. ii, ll. 42-3. This is the "rhetoricae suadela dulcedinis" (see Rand, pp. 8-9).

⁶⁸ See II, pr. vi, ll. 63 ff. (partly quoted above.)

⁶⁹ II, pr. vi, vii, etc.

⁷⁰ IV, pr. vi, ll. 21 ff. Fate is the rim. Note the confusion of characteristics of Fortune with those of Fate: "Illud certe manifestum est immobilem simplicemque gendarum formam rerum esse providentiam, fatum vero eorum quae divina simplicitas gerenda disposuit mobilem nexum atque ordinem temporalem" (IV, pr. vi, ll. 52-6). For the further development of this confusion in Albertus Magnus, cf. below, n. 104.

evil enter the world? To this Boethius gives two answers. The first is his first attempt at reconciling Fortuna with Christianity.

He explains that evil from a certain point of view is good. Granted that good fortune is bad for us, ill-fortune is good for us:

Etenim plus hominibus reor adversam quam prosperam prodesse fortunam. illa enim semper specie felicitatis, cum videtur blanda, mentitur: haec semper vera est, cum se instabilem mutatione demonstrat. illa fallit, haec instruit, illa mendacium specie bonorum mentes fruentium ligat, haec cognitione fragilis felicitatis absolvit. itaque illam videas ventosam fluentem suique semper ignaram, hanc sobriam succinctamque et ipsius adversitatis exercitatione prudentem. postremo felix a vero bono devios blanditiis trahit, adversa plerumque ad vera bona reduces unco retrahit.⁷¹

She teaches you your true friends, for example.⁷²

The weakness of this conception is revealed by the confusion of goddess and type. The personified abstraction is used, and yet Boethius seems to have felt he was again describing the goddess (see, in the passage above, "fluentem suique semper ignaram"). Fortuna, the goddess, would not suffer her own adversities, but the idea is a compromise. Good-Fortune is a demon; Ill-Fortune is something else,—an angel?

(c) The second answer Boethius gives to the question of evil is that evil is non-existent.⁷³ It is only apparent. God, who is all good, cannot create evil, and thus even good-fortune may work for good ends. Philosophy warns a man not to trust entirely in the strength of his own mind: "Cui si quid eveniat adversi, desinet colere forsitan innocentiam per quam non potuit retinere fortunam. parcit itaque sapiens dispensatio ei quem deteriore facere possit adversitas, ne cui non convenit laborare patiatur."⁷⁴ Providence acts in various ways with a motive:

Aliis mixta quaedam pro animorum qualitate distribuit: quosdam remordet, ne longa felicitate luxurient: alios duris agitari, ut virtutes animi patientiae usu atque exercitatione confirment.⁷⁵

Iamne igitur vides quid haec omnia quae diximus consequatur?—Quidnam? inquam.—Omnem, inquit, bonam prorsus esse fortunam. . . . cum omnis fortuna vel iucunda vel aspera tum remunerandi exercendive bonos tum puniendi corrigendive improbos causa deferatur, omnis bona quam vel iustam constat esse vel utilem.⁷⁶

⁷¹ II, pr. viii, ll. 7-18; and see the whole section.

⁷² *Ibid.* 18-24.

⁷³ See Rand, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

⁷⁴ IV, pr. vi, ll. 129-133.

⁷⁵ IV, pr. vi, ll. 140-44. See the whole passage.

⁷⁶ IV, pr. vii, ll. 1-8.

All fortune is good; and good and bad fortune both have their proper work to do in the world.⁷⁷

This answer to the problem of Fortune's place in the universe raises the question of the relation of chance to destiny, and of chance to free-will. Boethius in the fifth book settles the question of free-will and the providence of God by asserting both. God's providence is beyond the comprehension of our reason.⁷⁸

We must observe that Boethius after his second treatment of Fortuna does not use the figure of the goddess.⁷⁹ An inference of such a figure in subordination to Divine Providence is easily drawn, but Boethius did not draw it. He later settles the discussion of the element of chance by means of the Aristotelian terms, exactly as the Aristotelian discussion passed over into the commentaries of the Church Fathers.⁸⁰ That is the end of Fortuna, the goddess of chance, for him philosophically. Yet he suggests very clearly the other possibility. Put the passage "omnem bonam esse fortunam" with the following,

Sive igitur famulantibus quibusdam providentiae divinis spiritibus fatum exercetur seu anima seu tota inserviente natura seu caelestibus siderum motibus seu angelica virtute seu daemonum varia sollertia seu aliquibus horum seu omnibus fatalis series textitur,⁸¹

and you have almost the Christian conception.⁸² The idea as

⁷⁷ The idea is taken up from Boethius by Robert Holcot, *Lectio XCV*: "Et ideo nulla fortuna mala est apud sapientem sicut declarat Boe.," etc.

⁷⁸ See V, pr. vi.

⁷⁹ Alfred, who translates Fortune the goddess by *woruldsæld*, and fortune the abstraction by *wyrd*, keeps the distinction clear. See XL, §1 (Boethius, IV, pr. vii, 2 ff.), Sedgfield's ed., p. 137: "Ic wille secgan, þæt wyrd bio good, sam hio monnum good þince, sam hio him yfel þince."

⁸⁰ See V, pr. i, 34 ff. ("Aristoteles meus," etc.), 51 ff. ("Licet igitur definire casum esse inopinatum ex confluentibus causis in his quae ob aliquid geruntur eventum").

⁸¹ IV, pr. vi, 48 ff.

⁸² See Busetto on Dante, *Giornale Dantesco*, XII, 129-138. And see Venuti-De Dominicis' *Boezio*, vol. I, Grottaferrata, 1911, pp. 128-9: "Per quanto concerne la fortuna, Boezio la presenta come uno specioso, autonomo, ma chimerico potere; è diversa dal fato, non ha posto fisso nel sistema e si riduce a un mezzo educatore in mano di Dio, sottoposto a la provvidenza; è o prospera o avversa, ha per iscopo il bene: 'Omnis fortuna bona est.' "

Boethius left it is as orthodox as that of Thomas Aquinas,⁸³ and it has poetic insight as well.

Three inferences may be drawn from Boethius, however, one from each of his three methods of dealing with the goddess. And in studying his tradition it will be well to discriminate between these, in order to decide fairly what is the main tradition from his work. Is it merely that of the pagan Fortuna, or is his contribution greater?

HENRICUS SEPTIMELLENSIS

One of the earliest imitations of Boethius was written by Henricus Septimellensis, of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The imitation is proclaimed in its title, *De Diversitate Fortunae et Philosophiae Consolatione*. The author was a priest in the Church. He had a great inheritance, but was forced to give up his property and go begging:⁸⁴

Prologue:—The mind even as the body may grow infirm. For the body one goes to the doctor; for the spirit one goes to God. Book I.—How bereft is the world of probity! To whom shall I lament? To thee Fortuna, who, perfidious one, dost constrain me to suffer base injuries. I am the scorn of all. How can I cleanse myself of my ill-repute?

O mala dulcedo, subito quae sumpta venenas,
Quaevae recompensas mellea felle gravi!

* * * * *

Quid tibi, magne, tuli? quid, Jupiter? unde nocendi
Ista sitis? Coelo fulmina nulla tuli.

In fact, all are against me:

Sic mihi septenis nocet impia turba planetis.

* * * * *

Saturnus falcem; fulmen fert Iupiter; arma
Mars; Sol fervorem; dira venena Venus;
Mercurius virgam; cupidus fert Luna sagittas.
Septem septena concitat arma cohors.⁸⁵

⁸³ See Taylor, *Classical Heritage of the Middle Ages*, 3d ed., 1911, p. 54: "The *Consolation of Philosophy* is not a Christian work. . . . [But its author] presents Pagan ethics from the standpoint of one impressed by the problems which Christianity had made prominent, for instance, that of the compatibility of human free will and God's foreknowledge." Cf. Rand, *op. cit.*, and the discussion in Stewart. Rand calls Boethius "the first of the scholastics."

⁸⁴ See the introduction in the edition published at Prato, 1841. His biography has been written by Filippo Villani. The text here used is the original, with translation by Manni (Florence, 1730).

⁸⁵ Manni, pages 4-6.

Not Tityrus, Tantalus, Niobe, Job, Cadmus, Tristan, or any other ever suffered so much:

Obruor oceano, saevisque reverberor undis:
Nesciet hinc reditum mersa carina suum.⁸⁶

The time of prosperity is gone by. Thus Boreas turns the leaves on the trees, and the wheel revolves mortals. Fortune is more cruel than a serpent:

O Deus! o quare subito fortuna rotatu
Cuncta molendinat mobiliore rotam?⁸⁷

Alas, my soul:

Quam ferit Alecto, quam Thesiphon aequae fatigat,
Cui fortuna nocet, quamve Megaera ferit.⁸⁸

Henricus orders Fortune to stop her wheel and hearken:

Dic mihi quid feci? Responde, lingua dolosa;
Responde per eum, qui super astra sedet.⁸⁹

The goddess listens, swiftly spins her wheel, and replies. She reminds him of the extent of her power. Greek, Hebrew, Barbarian, and Latin fear and venerate her:

Meque Saladinus nimium vexilla salutis
Expugnans, hostem sentiet esse suam.⁹⁰

Let him beware! He replies: what worse can she do, "meretrix fortuna"? Why does her countenance change so? And he reviles her with the usual epithets (inconstans, vaga, mobilis, aspera, caeca, instabilis, levior, perfida, surda, fera).⁹¹

She, in turn, warns him to consider before he speaks. She knows her trade. She is the most powerful in the world. People decry her when she is unkind. When she is kind and gives riches—

Tunc ego summa parens, et tunc regina verenda
Tunc Dea summa Deo praeferor ipsa Iovi.⁹²

He continues his assault of names.⁹³ She reminds him of his humble origin. Whence comes his pride? She will remain in control in spite of such an ant as he. He replies that he will gain strength:

Non semper Marium, nec semper saepe rotatum
Volvis Apollonium: fortior alter erit,
Qui redimens mea probra, fero pugnabit agone,
Et tibi fors an atrox auferet ille caput.⁹⁴

* * * * *

Ni melius, quam iura, scias, ignava, rotatus
Staret, quem gyras, orbis in orbe tuo.⁹⁵

* * * * *

⁸⁶ Pages 6-7.

⁸⁷ Pages, 10, 13.

⁸⁸ Page 14.

⁸⁹ Page 14.

⁹⁰ Pages 14-15.

⁹¹ Page 15-16.

⁹² Pages 16-17.

⁹³ See p. 18: "Tu ratione carens nescia habere modum."

⁹⁴ Pages 19-20.

⁹⁵ Page 21.

Ergo tibi ius, cum sis furiosa, vetat.⁹⁶

The poem combines powerfully all the pagan remedies. It completes its lesson in the third book, where Philosophy with seven companions (the arts) appears and chides the author for forgetfulness. What has he to do with unjust Fortune? The reminiscences of Boethius's pagan Fortuna are more striking here.⁹⁷ She moves by pure caprice:

Promovet iniustos fortuna volubilis, ut quos
Scandere praecipites fecit, ad ima rotet.⁹⁸

Philosophy's advice is ultimately that of the spiritual remedy:

Fortunam dimitte vagam, permitte vagari,
Quae numquam stabili ludere fronte potest.
Contra fortunam sis constans, sis patiens, sis
Ferreus, adversi te neque frangat hyems.

Fortuna ridente gemas; plorante ioceris;⁹⁹

Ipsa sit auspicium tempus in omne tuum
Cuncta rotat fortuna rotam, quam cuncta rotantur:
Sic tenui magnus orbis in orbe perit.

Firmus in adversis; piger ad mala; tardus ad iram;
Promptus ad obsequium, (etc.)¹⁰⁰

Philosophy advises indifference to outer circumstances and fidelity to virtue alone.

This imitation of Boethius sometimes seems to approach the Christian Fortuna. It suggests, in the plea to God, that Fortuna is not the only power in the universe; but the moral pagan felt that. It does not introduce any greatly original treatment. It is hardly different from that of Hildebert of Lavardin in general intent.

ALBERTUS MAGNUS

The great German, Count of Bollstädt, Doctor Universalis, takes up the problem of Fortuna from the same point of view as

⁹⁶ Page 22.

⁹⁷ See p. 23:

Vis ipsam non esse vagam? natura repugnat,
Quae dedit instabilem semper, et esse vagam.

See a reference to Boethius, p. 24:

Nonne meus Severinus inani iure peremptus
Carcere Papiæ non patienda tulit?

which is not exactly the philosophical conclusion that Boethius intended should be drawn from his *Consolatio*.

⁹⁸ Page 26.

⁹⁹ Page 31. Cf. Nigellus Wireker. Cf. also Prior Godfrey's epigram, lxvi, in Wright's, *Anglo-Latin Satirical Poets*, II, 112:

Extolli noli, quod te fortuna beavit,
Pomponi, haec eadem quae levat ipsa premit.

¹⁰⁰ Pages 31 ff.

that of Thomas Aquinas. He made a study of the Aristotelian doctrine. His work, of course, falls at an earlier period than that of St. Thomas, for he was born at the end of the twelfth century.

I shall not repeat here the substance of the Aristotelian discussion. It will only be necessary to recall that Aristotle leaves the element of chance in the universe as *causa per accidens*.¹⁰¹

Albertus Magnus summarizes the positions of the different philosophers. In connection with his study of one set of opponents to the theory of chance, he says: "Videtur etiam contra fidem Catholicam esse si ponatur casus et fortuna. Si enim omnia quae futura sunt quocunque modi, praescit Deus." And he brings up the question of Divine Providence: God could not foresee if chance played a part in the world, "Ergo videtur haeresis ponere casum et fortunam."¹⁰²

Again if things happen wholly under divine ordinance, we are robbed of human free-will.¹⁰³ Albertus confirms Boethius's idea of fate and his wheel figure, perhaps because it seems to retain both the element of chance (or at least change) and divine foreordination: "Cum enim prima causarum sit Deus, et omnium quorum causa est, ipse providentiam habeat."¹⁰⁴ He refers to the "mediantibus causis universalibus,"¹⁰⁵ and to the fates, "Nihil

¹⁰¹ Here of course is the same reference to Nature, distinguishing it from Fortune (see Albertus, *Physicorum*, lib. II, tr. ii, cap. x, *Opera*, II, 82 ff.) In Boethius also a distinction is felt to which I have not referred above: "Numquam tua faciet esse fortuna quae a te natura rerum fecit aliena. Terrarum quidem fructus animantium procul dubio debentur alimentis. sed si, quod naturae satis est, replere indigentiam velis, nihil est quod fortunae affluentiam petas," *De Philos. Cons.*, (II, pr. v, 37-42). Nature seems to be the deity who governs vegetable and plant life, and physical and sometimes mental man. The distinction is not always clear. See Albertus, cap. xviii, where Nature and Intellect are set off against each other: "Sed utrumque istorum facientium, natura videlicet et intellectus, sunt de genere causae efficientis."

¹⁰² *Physicorum*, lib. II, tr. ii, cap. x (*Opera*, II, 83).

¹⁰³ "Quod autem hoc nihil sit, videtur: quia sic eveniunt quae eveniunt immobiliter simpliciter, et non habent immobilitatem "nisi quoad me vel te qui non praevidemus ea. Hoc autem si verum est, tunc perit liberum arbitrium, et perit consilium, sicut et perit casus et perit fortuna" (*ibid.* 83-4).

¹⁰⁴ Cap. xix (*ibid.* 92). See also cap. xx, especially the definition of Fortuna (*per accidens*) and the Fortuna-like Fata passage: "Si autem consideretur ipsa secundum esse quod habet communiter ex supremis et imis, tunc ipsa est in quibusdam mobilis per accidens, hoc est, per esse quod habet in illis: de se autem est immobilis: quia procedit ab immobili ordine et cardine causarum."

¹⁰⁵ Cap. xix.

autem horum quae dicta sunt, est contra fidem vel praescientiam: quoniam praescientia nullam rebus imponit necessitatem."¹⁰⁶ Thus, Boethius, he says, allows Fate, "quia quae sunt in ipsa intemporaliter et simpliciter et immobiliter, secundum quod descendunt ex ipsa, sic fiunt plus et plus temporalia et multiplicia et mobilia et contingentia."¹⁰⁷

If we substitute Fortune for this kind of fickle Fate, we have the Christian Fortune; and it is an easy substitution. This is about as close as we shall be able to get to the conception of Fortune in Albertus. He rejects the suggestion of the Mathematici who deny chance and fortune in favor of complete divine ordination:

Solutionem autem quae inducta est, ego non iudico approbandam. Sed potius dicendum est hic modo hoc dicto: quia sic non perit casus, nec perit liberum arbitrium, nec perit consilium, nec omnia hoc modo attingunt finem in natura ordinatum, sicut probant obiectiones inductae.¹⁰⁸

Later in the differentiation between "constellatio" and "fatum" and "fortuna," fortuna seems to be accepted but as subordinate to a primal cause.¹⁰⁹

I can find, then, no single definite conception of Fortune in Albertus Magnus. He wants to retain divine providence and human free-will. One thing we are sure of: he wants to retain Fortuna. What we may deduce from this discussion, since he regards Boethius as in general satisfactory, is much the same as what we get in Boethius. Neither settles the problem.

¹⁰⁶ Cap. xxi.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ *Ethicorum*, I, tr. vii, cap. vi (*Opera*, I, 67): "Unde constellatio et fatum et fortuna differunt, licet in eisdem sint subiectis et ab eisdem causis. Fortuna enim est secundum quod adhaeret nato. Fatum autem eadem qualitas secundum quod in tota incomplexione causarum est fusa. Constellatio autem secundum quod est in primis motoribus per diversitatem circulorum et domorum angulorum et respectum aliorum secundum quod in circulis est causata. Unde una qualitas est in constellatione et fato et fortuna variata secundum esse. Et hoc modo accepta fortuna quidam sub fortuna felicitatem esse ponebant: et ideo dicebant fortunam esse trahentem, sed necessitatem non imponere animis. Animus enim hominis per ordinationem sapientiae, sicut dicit Ptolemaeus, dominatur fortunae et fato et constellationi." Cf. *Ethic.*, VII, tr. ii, cap. iv: (*ibid.* 287): "Fortuna enim est qualitas accepta in nato incomplexione causarum ab caelo descendens secundum nativitatis periodum, qua quis naturalem accipit potentiam," etc.

The difficulty in general was not properly dealt with, and one attempt at its solution is obvious in another bit of treatment, where, as in the work of Henricus Septimellensis, God and Fortuna are brought in close proximity. It is from the twelfth or thirteenth century:

Gratia, Christe, tibi, quod cum mihi vulnera quaerant,
 Das ut pro meritis vulnera prima ferant.
 Cui fortuna subest, cujus nutum comitantur
 Casus, fata, status, tempora, corda, manus.
 En solus tantusque manens quantus voluisti,
 Omnia velle tuum sunt, et eras, es, eris.¹¹⁰

III

The Christian Fortuna

In the previous chapter and in this we have seen two great conceptions of Fortuna in the Middle Ages,—the pagan and the Ecclesiastical. The pagan allows Fortuna to exist; the Church, laying emphasis on a single God, does not see its way clear to keep any other deity. The union of these two points of view is found in the poetic vision of Dante, who solves the problem of Fortuna without a compromise and with conclusions satisfactory to both opinions. This work represents only another way in which Dante is the "mediaeval synthesis."¹¹¹ He is the creator of the complete Christian Fortuna.

The passage in which Fortuna appears is so important that I shall quote it entire for convenient reference. Virgil has referred to the goddess; Dante takes the name from his lips and requires an explanation:

'Maestro,' diss' io lui, 'or mi di' anche:
 Questa Fortuna di che tu mi tocche,
 Che è, che i ben del mondo ha sì tra branche?'
 E quegli a me: 'O creature sciocche,
 Quanta ignoranza è quella che vi offende!
 Or vo' che tu mia sentenza ne imboche.
 Colui lo cui saper tutto trascende
 Fece li cieli, e diè lor chi conduce,
 Sì che ogni parte ad ogni parte splende,

¹¹⁰ Archdeacon Henry, *De Statu Suo*, in Wright's *Satirical Poets*, II, 170.

¹¹¹ Cf. his union of the pagan and Christian in his use of Courtly Love. See, for this, Taylor's *Mediaeval Mind*, II, 555 ff. "Mediaeval synthesis" is Taylor's expression.

Distribüendo egualmente la luce.
 Similmente agli splendor mondani
 Ordinò general ministra e duce,
 Che permutasse a tempo li ben vani
 Di gente in gente e d'uno in altro sangue,
 Oltre la difension de' senni umani:
 Per che una gente impera, e l'altra langue,
 Seguendo lo giudizio di costei,
 Che è occulto, come in erba l'angue.
 Vostro saper non ha contrasto a lei:
 Questa provvede, giudica e persegue
 Suo regno, come il loro gli altri dei.
 Le sue permutazion non hanno triegue;
 Necessità la fa esser veloce,
 Sì spesso vien chi vicenda consegue.
 Quest' è colei ch'è tanto posta in croce
 Pur da color che le dovrian dar lode,
 Dandole biasmo a torto e mala voce.
 Ma ella s'è beata e ciò non ode:
 Con l'altre prime creature lieta
 Volve sua spera, e beata si gode.¹¹²

Fortuna is, then, "general ministra e duce." She has real if occult order in her business ("questa provvede, giudica," etc.)¹¹³ She deals in mundane wealth ("che permutasse a tempo li ben vani"). The treatment is a fusion of the old traits of the pagan goddess with Christian doctrine. Fortuna is pagan and Boethian in that she embodies the pagan whimsicality in outward manner and is yet subordinate to a greater Deity; she does not award necessarily according to merit, and yet her madness has method because she is obeying the decrees of a superior will. To give her official recognition as an angelic power with her own peculiar duties, was a step Boethius and Albertus Magnus did not take.¹¹⁴ So far as Italy is concerned, this is an entirely new poetical conception, however much suggestive material Dante might have found in his predecessors. The most original touch is that of the martyrdom

¹¹² *Inferno*, VII, 67-96. See my study of this passage in the Thirty-third Annual Report of the Dante Society (Cambridge, Mass.), 1916, pp. 13-28. I shall hope to publish later a more detailed investigation of the development of Dante's conception.

¹¹³ Cf. Graf (*Miti, Leggende*, etc.), I, 287. "Molte volte, gli è vero, la provvidenza divina, secondo il concetto che se ne forma il credente del medio evo, opera il male, o sembra operare il male."

¹¹⁴ See a summary of the philosophy in this passage, Graf, I, 300-301.

of the goddess ("Quest' è colei ch' è tanto posta in croce"); but we are told that she is quite serene about it, because, of course, she knows the heavenly plan ("beata si gode"). The picture is, like everything in Dante, sublime.

Perhaps the function of Fortuna seems limited here; but if we believe that the bulk of the references to Fortune in Dante depend upon this conception in the background of the poet's mind,¹¹⁵ we can widen the field of her activities. She is the guide of man as well as the giver of wealth;¹¹⁶ she bestows fame;¹¹⁷ she is related to Death;¹¹⁸ she controls war.¹¹⁹ Reason aids her: riches "vengono da fortuna ch' è da ragione aiutata . . . o vengono da fortuna aiutatrice di ragione."¹²⁰

This distinction from a steadfast fate is clear in the apparent mobility of Fortuna. Graf describes Dante's conception of Fate as follows: "Dante, ora fa del volere divino e del fato una sola e medesima cosa, ora sembra che, almeno fantasticamente, li distingua, e distingue pure il fato dalla fortuna."¹²¹ The line, "Necessità la fa esser veloce," seems merely to mean that, since it is the divine injunction that Fortuna shall carry on her business in her own peculiar way, she is compelled to do so.¹²²

¹¹⁵ There is a reminiscence of the pagan remedy of fortitude, *Inferno*, XV, 92 ff.; a reference to Aristotle, *Convivio*, IV, xi, 82 ff.; and complete annihilation of the goddess, *De Monarchia*, II, x, 70 ff.

¹¹⁶ *Inferno*, XIII, 98; XV, 46; XXX, 146; XXXII, 76.

¹¹⁷ *Inferno*, XV, 70 ff.; *Paradiso*, XVI, 82 ff.

¹¹⁸ *Canzone X*, 90.

¹¹⁹ *De Monarchia*, II, xi, 43; *Inferno*, XXX, 13.

¹²⁰ *Convivio*, IV, xi, 62 ff.

¹²¹ *Miti*, etc., I, 277. See his references to *Inferno*, XXI, 82; *Purgatorio*, XXX, 142-4, etc.

¹²² Cf. Cecco d'Ascoli, *Acerba* (Rosario's ed., Lanciano, 1916), lib. II, cap. i, lines 19-22, referred to by Benevenuto de Rambaldi, and quoted by G. Boffito, *Giornale Storico*, Suppl. 6 (1903), p. 28:

In ciò peccasti, o fiorentin poeta,
Ponendo che li ben de la fortuna
Necessitati siano con lor meta:
Non è fortuna che ragion non vinca.

This is merely a refusal to accept the Christian Fortuna and her occult order. It is reminiscent of Thomas Aquinas, and is taken over by Boffito to mean that in Dante's philosophy no men but the astrologers (who can foresee the blows of Fortune) can have free-will. Boffito thinks Dante refers to Cecco in *De Monarchia* (I, cap. xii, l. 6, of Moore's edition). See, for the correction of all this, *Benevenuti de Rambaldi de Imola Comentum* (Florence, 1887), I, 264, which says that the

As to a "remedy" for the work of the Christian Fortune, Dante does not give any; logical deduction suggests the remedy that one is to remember Fortuna's subservience to God. Of course the realization that the will of Fortune is the will of God means submission to her and humble acceptance of her decree. Thus the remedy would be a mingling of all the pagan remedies. Her cruelty requires patience; her occult reasons call for wise interpretation; and her goods, "li ben vani," are not to be sought. The Ecclesiastical remedy of annihilation is not used, and Fortuna is allowed to remain in the scheme of the universe. It would be hazardous to assert that Dante did not believe in an actual angel with particular duties of the kind he describes.¹²³

Whatever his personal faith, his artistic creed includes a poetic conception unrivalled by predecessors. Philosophy under Christian influence went farther than under the pagan, and did its utmost to deal with Fortuna in a way satisfactory to the popular conscience; but, as Sir Philip Sidney says in his *Apologie for Poetrie*, poetry is superior to philosophy, and here the final touch has been added by the poet.

Three great methods, then, of settling the problem of Fortuna are presented to us in the early part of the Middle Ages: (1) Fortuna is completely annihilated; (2) she is retained with a supreme God above her,—their relations are not exactly definite, but obviously she must be in part fulfilling His will; (3) she is retained as a minister of His will, directly appointed to manage casual affairs. The remedy for the Christian Fortuna is similar in many respects to that for the pagan, and it will be difficult—often impossible—to tell which an author had in mind. But the figures themselves are distinct enough.

passage in *Purgatorio*, XVI, 73 ff., "Lo cielo i vostri movimenti inizia," etc., is thus explained by some: "Si fortuna est, de necessitate est mutabilis, quia ut dicit Boetius: *Si manere incipit, sors esse desistit*." See also Murari (*Dante e Boezio*, pp. 284-6), who refers to Horace, Ode I, xxxv, 17, and to Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, quaest. 82, art. 1.

¹²³ Cf. St. Augustine, *De Civ. Dei.*, V, viii (Migne, XLI, 148), "A quo sunt omnes potestates, quamvis ab illo non sint omnium voluntates"; and Busetto (*Giornale Dantesco*, XII, 132), "E forse, nello scriver così, sant' Agostino concepiva, in ordine alle vicende delle cose contingenti, una volontà superiore e *indipendente*, per quanto la potestà, di che Iddio l'abbia insignita, dipenda dalla Potestà suprema di lui." See also St. Augustine, *De Civ. Dei*, V, ix; Boethius, *De Philos. Consol.*, IV, pr. vi, 48 ff.

CHAPTER IV

FORTUNA IN ITALIAN LITERATURE FROM DANTE TO THE RENAISSANCE

With Dante our study entered the literature of the Italian vernacular. Latin had become more and more restricted to learned discourse, and art in general found its expression in the more familiar speech. Allegory, complaint, satire, and song now employ the language of everyday life; and, after the time of Dante, Latin certainly was not that. With the less formal speech comes the more secular and less consciously philosophical literature. Dante may be remembered satisfactorily as a philosopher; but Petrarch and Boccaccio, although they philosophize at times, do not fit conveniently into any such category.

I

Among the poets grouped about Dante in the *trecento*, both the pagan and the Christian Fortuna make their appearance. The Christian goddess is, of course, to be found in the verse directly inspired by Dante. Close reminiscences of the greater poet form the chief theme of two anonymous poems of this period.¹²⁴ The

¹²⁴ See *Giornale Storico della Lett. Ital.*, XIV, 33 (from the *Codice Parmense*, 1081); see also *Giornale Storico*, XII, 101, c. 98 (from the *Codice Parmense*): "Ministra e donna delli ben terreni." The second poem is found in *Poeti del Primo Secolo*, II, 312, and cf. 327,

Ma è la mente dell' uom tanto grossa,
Che comprender non può cosa divina.

See also, for the Christian Fortuna, *Poeti*, etc., 326 ff., "Io son la donna, che volgo la rota," etc., there assigned to Guido Cavalcanti. This is translated by D. G. Rossetti (Oxford ed. of poems, p. 416), who doubts the authorship, and is reprinted by G. Volpi (*Rime di Trecentisti Minori*, pp. 210 ff.), who assigns it to Gano da Colle. See the theme of the Christian defense, "Ch' è tanto posta in croce," in Flamini's *Lirica Toscana*, pp. 516 ff. and references. It is difficult to tell what we have in the case of Cino da Pistoia (*Vita e Memorie*, II, 146):

Et a la fin costretto da l'artiglio
Di quella, ch'ognor sembia al mondo inganni,
Lasciai la Patria, e gli onorati scanni,
E'l sicuro cammin di vertù piglio.

pagan Fortuna continues in the poetry of the earlier writers of the thirteenth century.¹²⁵

PETRARCH

The importance of Petrarch (1304-1374) in Italian literature needs no discussion. It is well, however, to remember the wide sweep of his influence, as we see the number of times he mentions Fortuna in his works and the emphasis he lays on her activities. The passages in which Fortuna appears are vivid and striking, but none of them is extensive enough in itself to be useful to us here. In general it is the pagan Fortuna who is described, and rarely is there a question of other treatment.¹²⁶ Naturally, Petrarch has a tendency to employ the Fortune of Love rather frequently in the Laura poetry.¹²⁷ So much for the general and more or less casual references.

¹²⁵ See *Poesie Ital. Inedite*, ed. Trucchi, II, 55, 98, and IV, 285; Carducci, *Cantilene e Ballate*, pp. 109 ff. (no. LXXV), which perhaps is a compromise:

Non ha diletto Iddio più grazioso,
Se volger degna li occhi suoi in terra,
Com' è di riguardare un virtuoso
A cui l'aspra fortuna faccia guerra.

For "La Ballata di Frate Stoppa," see A. Medin's *Ballata della Fortuna*, App. II (*Propugnatore*, 1889, pp. 139 ff.), and Carducci's *Cantilene*, pp. 104 ff. (no. LXXIV). Medin (pp. 108 ff.) shows the indebtedness of the *Ballata della Fortuna* to the other. See Frate Stoppa, stanza iii:

Però che 'l tuor e 'l dare
Cristo reservi al suo voler iocondo
Se la Fortuna e 'l mondo.

See also stanza xvii:

Adonca è beato colui
Ch' al suo Iove l'animo suo dreza,
E sempre serve a lui,
Né per adversità mai non s'adreza,
Né per mal far mai non guiza
Nil ben mondan ch' è nulla.

A touch of the Petrarchan remedy.

¹²⁶ See the complaint against all the powers ("stella," "fortuna," "fato," "morte"), *Morte*, son. XXX. See also suggestions of the compromise:

Utrum mihi possint contingere viderit deus et fortuna mea videritis et vos domini et amici mei (*Scritti Inediti*, p. 328);

A la fortuna avversa

Questo rimedio provedesse il cielo

Canz. IX, l. 53 (Mestica's ed., p. 112). See also *Africa*, VI, 623.

¹²⁷ See particularly Albertini's ed., *Vita*, canzones VII, XVI, sonnets LXXXV, CXVII, CLII, and *Morte*, son. VI; Mestica's ed., canz. XXVI, 8, sonnets CLXXVII, CXCH.

As for deliberate discussion, Petrarch takes up the question of the goddess at two different times. First, in *De Remediis Utriusque Fortunae*. This is an extensive development of the theme: Do not trust either Fortune, good or bad. The theme derives immediately from the Classical conception of the two cults of Fortuna, Bona and Mala,¹²⁸ and from the Classical remedies.¹²⁹ Petrarch's elaboration has been so influential,¹³⁰ and it embodies so fully the remedy of prudence and of spiritual devotion, that it deserves special attention. The idea, developed from the Classics, growing further in suggestions from Nigellus Wireker and Boethius and becoming generally popular,¹³¹ finds here its greatest expression.

¹²⁸ See Valerius Maximus, lib. VI, cap. ix: "Iam Alcibiadem quasi duae fortunae partitae sunt: altera, quae ei nobilitatem eximiam, abundantes divitias, formam praestantissimam, favorem civium propensum, summa imperia, praecipuas potentiae vires, flagrantissimum ingenium assignaret: altera, quae damnationem, exsilium, venditionem bonorum, inopiam, odium patriae, violentam mortem infligeret. Nec aut haec, aut illa universa; sed varia, perplexa, freto atque aestui similia." Cf. Seneca's *Thyestes*, 454; cf. also the double Fortuna of Antium, in Roscher's *Lexikon*, I, 1546-8.

¹²⁹ A. Piaget (*Martin le Franc*, p. 170) says Seneca was the model for Petrarch. The Latin tract, *De Remediis Fortuitorum Liber (Opera Quae Supersunt, Suppl.*, Teubner, Lipsiae, 1902, pp. 44 ff.), is a dialogue between Reason and Sensuality. Jacques Bauchant, who translated it into French for Charles V, puts Gallio for Sensuality and Seneca for Reason (see Piaget, pp. 169-170). Petrarch, in his *De Remediis* (Dassaminiato's ed., I, 50 ff.) tells of the relation of his work to Seneca; he says that Seneca did not include remedies against the betrayal of Good Fortune, which Petrarch adds.

¹³⁰ For a list of editions, see D. W. Fiske's *Bibliographical Notices*, III; note among them (nos. 51, 54), Thomas Twyne's *Phisicke against Fortune, as well Prosperous as Adverse*, London, 1579, and Nicole Oresme's French translation (XIV cent.) The editions frequently include pictures of Fortune (see the German ones of 1539, 1551); see also Weinhold's *Glücksrad u. Lebensrad*, p. 11 (on the Augsburg, 1532, ed. of *De Rem.*) and pp. 29, 31 (woodcuts). Piaget notes, p. 170, n. 2, the French translation by Jean Daudin for Charles V, and on p. 169 mentions Bauchant's translation of Seneca's tract (see note 129 above). I have a book-catalogue reference to a Scottish (?) edition of a treatise that seems to carry on this theme: (Johnston, 96, March 1913; 122 Budaei) 1521, *De Contemptu Rerum Fortuitorum Libri Tres*. Lydgate (*Falls of Princes*, prol., st. 37-8) refers to Petrarch's "two Fortunes."

¹³¹ See the development of this theme from Nigellus Wireker on: Bartolommeo da S. Concordio, *Ammaestramenti*, Distinz. 37, Rub. ii ("Che'l savio nè per prosperità s'innalza"); Trucchi, *Poesie Ital. Ined.*, II, 98 ("Tu se' in sulla ruota; or ti ricorda"); Vincent of Beauvais, *Spec. Histor.*, lib. XXVI, cap. cix ("Nec prosperis

De Remediis aims chiefly to set reason and virtue in opposition to Fortune. A brief outline of the work is enough to indicate the method. The prologue tells us that beasts, possessing no reason, do not feel the vicissitudes of Fortune, but man, who has that noble faculty, does. This uncomfortable state of things can be repaired only by fortifying one's self with wisdom against Fortuna. Cultivate the intellect by wide reading. Remember that *Fortuna prospera* is even more dangerous than *Fortuna adversa*. How many emperors have lost their realms from weakness! To quote from Giovanni Dassaminiato's translation of Petrarch's Latin:¹³² "A te la fortuna non hà dato regno nè tolto, benchè la natura t'avesse dato cuore reale."¹³³

The first book consists of dialogues between Reason and Joy, and between Reason and Hope. We see the transitoriness of worldly blessings; the exclusive value of spiritual blessings.¹³⁴ The second book goes over the old ground of philosophical consolation, in a dialogue between Reason and Dolor, which are, after all, the types represented in the dialogue between Philosophy and the grieving Boethius. The difference from Boethius is great, of course, in that Petrarch covers the whole range of possible sources of grief besides banishment or imprisonment.¹³⁵

excitant; nec adversis castigant"). For discussion, see Flamini, *Lir. Tosc.*, p. 513. See also *Eneas*, ed. Salverda de Grave, lines 674 ff.

¹³² The Italian translation was made by Don Giovanni Dassaminiato. For the Christian fortune, see Stolfi's preface, I, 30 ff.

¹³³ I, 52. See p. 54, for description of the use of valor against the *tempeste della fortuna*.

¹³⁴ Thus: Cap. I, "Dell' etade fiorita e della speranza della lunga vita"; II, Physical beauty passes away; III, Health too; IV, Excel in mind rather than in body; V, Trust not bodily strength; VI, Swiftness may lead to death; VII, Wit too is insidious. Other topics are: He is wise who pretends to have wisdom; Spurn the world, and take pleasure in Christ; True freedom is freedom from sin; Race, city, fortune, give false nobility; Why ornament the body, which is food for worms? Be moderate. The book covers the range of human life,—keeping animals for profit, coming out of prison, alchemy, etc., etc. From CIX on, Speranza speaks.

¹³⁵ For the subjects discussed, see the chapter headings: Do not mind lack of beauty; Gold is often hid in a vile heap; Base parentage, race, servitude, and even poverty, do not count; Only virtue counts; Bear an unpleasant wife, infamy, faithless friends, hatred of the people, a step-mother, deaths, a lost kingdom, with stout heart; Consider only avoiding sins; Tomorrow you die; Worry not lest you lie unburied.

The most important comment on Fortuna is in the prologue of the second book: "Non voglio, ancora, ch' e' t'offenda il nome della fortuna. . . . Ora, perch' io ho a favellare a persone massimamente, che sono poco litterati; viddi che di necessità mi conviene usare il suo noto e comune vocabulo."¹³⁶ Petrarch has used the word many times, but we now see that it has been just an empty name.

Our next bit of evidence of Petrarch's attitude toward the goddess is intensely interesting. The liberation of King John of France from the prison of the English king took place in 1360.¹³⁷ On the thirteenth day of December in that year, John returned to Paris.¹³⁸ Shortly afterwards (in January) Petrarch spoke before the French monarch consoling his majesty for his past adversities and rejoicing with him at his escape. He attributed to Fortuna the whole guilt of the king's suffering.¹³⁹ In a letter to a friend,¹⁴⁰ Petrarch describes how his mention of the name Fortuna disturbed his hearers. At dinner, later, he was asked to give his opinion about the goddess; but, having had no time to arrange his ideas formally, he was glad to escape from discourse through an accidental turn of the king's interest. He was not to evade the question entirely, however, for three *doctores* met with him in his chamber and talked it over the rest of the day from *sesta* to *sera*. Evidently the topic could not be lightly dropped and the heresy was nothing new. The experience aroused Petrarch to some systematic thought on the subject; and, five years after, he wrote a letter to Tommaso del Garbo containing his views.¹⁴¹

Touching on the question of the comparative superiority of *Opinione* and *Fortuna*, Petrarch says Tommaso is not the only one who magnifies Fortuna. Many others join the vulgar throng in the faith of the goddess.¹⁴² Too many attribute the favor of Fortune

¹³⁶ Vol. II, 36. Petrarch refers to St. Jerome for the annihilation of Fortuna ("quello che sotto brevità santo Jeronimo scrisse").

¹³⁷ See Barbeau du Rocher, in *Mémoires de l'Académie des Inscriptions*, etc., 2d series, III, 189. John left Calais on Oct. 25th, 1360.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.* 190.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.* 214 ff.

¹⁴⁰ The letter (to Pietro di Poitiers) is quoted by Barbeau du Rocher, pp. 225-7. See the translation in Fracassetti, *Lettere Familiari*, IV, lib. xxii, lett. xiii. The letter was written Sept. 8, 1362.

¹⁴¹ See a translation in Fracassetti, *Lettere Senili*, I, lib. viii, lett. iii, pp. 468 ff.

¹⁴² *Ibid.* 468: "E alcuno ancora de' moderni la collocò come Diva nel cielo."

to something besides virtue (Petrarch in *De Remediis* is obviously one of these), and seek to be friends of Fortune rather than of God. The word "Fortuna" is but an expression:

Io miserabile peccatore, inteso peraltro a cure secolaresche, udendolo sulla bocca di tutti, e scritto trovandolo in ogni libro, lo ripetei mille volte nelle mie opericcivole: e tanto fui lungi dal pentirmene che scrissi non ha guari un libro avente per titolo: *I rimedi dell' una e dell' altra fortuna*, ove non già di due Fortune, ma di una sola a due faccie tenni lungo discorso.

He draws attention to Aristotle, Lactantius, and St. Augustine, who deny the existence of Fortune, and declares emphatically:

Ed io ti rispondo che la Fortuna veramente ho sempre stimato esser nulla. . . . Credesi generalmente che quando accade alcuna cosa senza cagione apparente (chè senza causa veramente non accade mai nulla), avvenga per caso, e s' imputa alla Fortuna.¹⁴³

Petrarch, then, annihilates Fortune, and in so doing follows both the Classics and the Church Fathers.¹⁴⁴ This solution of the Fortune problem represents his official and apparently his private belief, but his frequent use of the symbol shows his feeling for the element of chance in the world.

BOCCACCIO

All the world loves the teller of a love-story, and Boccaccio (1313-1375) has long satisfied the world's desire for that kind of literature. His interest in Fortuna, as one would expect, is very great. In his works I have found over two hundred and fifty minor references to the goddess, which make an approximate average of one to every twenty pages, and probably I have not counted them all. They appear everywhere, even in his letters (without any purpose of particular discussion);¹⁴⁵ and there is an average of at least one full treatment to each of his important works. Since Boccaccio is principally interested in telling love-stories, it is natural that the Fortune of Love is a favorite with him. Such wide and scattered use cannot but point to a quality in the

¹⁴³ *Ibid.* 469-472. Cf. p. 473, where he says that to avoid disputes, he has always used the common parlance about Fortuna: "E mentre uso parole che dalla fortuna prendono la loro etimologia, son però sempre fermo nel credere che la Fortuna non esista." He refers to the Christian conception, p. 474: "I quali vogliono ad ogni modo che la Fortuna sia . . . in una qualche ignota ministra ed esecutrice de' divini voleri."

¹⁴⁴ See Graf's classification, *Miti, Leggende*, etc., I, 273.

¹⁴⁵ *Lettere* (appended to *Opere*, vol. XVII), pp. 6, 22, 33, 118.

construction of his plots: Fortuna is the *dea ex machina*; or at least we must say that the element of chance plays a large part in the narrative. He frequently refers to the pagan remedies—those of fortitude and spiritual devotion.¹⁴⁶ He refers to what seems like the compromise,—Fortuna and God (or the gods), with Jove as a possible substitute.¹⁴⁷ But has he in general any consistent philosophy on the subject?

In the *De Casibus*, Boccaccio depicts what seems like the Christian Fortuna. In that work, Fortune continually and faithfully punishes vice, although it is only indirectly that she herself becomes moral. Boccaccio's own purpose, which is set forth in his preface, is moral enough:

Ut dum segnes, fluxosque principes, et Dei iudicio quassatos in solum, reges viderint, Dei potentiam, fragilitatem suam, et fortunae lubricum noscant: et laetis modum ponere discant, ut aliorum periculo suae possint utilitati consulere.

And again:

Nam quid satius est, quam vires omnes exponere, ut in frugem melioris vitae retrahantur errantes, à desidibus sopitis letalis somnus excutiat, vitia reprimantur, et extollantur virtutes.¹⁴⁸

The greatest sin is pride,¹⁴⁹ which is punished regularly by Fortune; for, according to the remedy of spiritual devotion, sin brings you into the power of the goddess, and it is a trait of her character to delight in humiliating the exalted. Consequently she plays an extensive rôle here.¹⁵⁰ The book is a development of the tragic

¹⁴⁶ *Decameron* V, i; (*ibid.* III, 21, 30), X, x, (*ibid.* V, 133, 135; *Fiammetta*, IX (*ibid.* VI, 203); *Ameto* (*ibid.* XV, 159); etc. There are references to the possibility of weakening before Fortuna: *Donne Famose*, cap. XXXI (p. 85); *Decam.*, V, i; (*Opere*, III, 21); *Filostrato*, proem. (*ibid.* XIII, 6). Fortuna becomes an aid to the fearful: *Decam.*, VI, iv (*ibid.* III, 137).

¹⁴⁷ See *Fiam.*, VII, "O supremo Giove . . . E a te, o Fortuna" (*ibid.* VI, 171–2, and cf. 102, 126 ff.); *Decam.*, X, ix (*ibid.* V, 113); *Filocolo*, II and IV, Fortuna and "gli Iddii" (*ibid.* VII, 159, VIII, 162, 177). He distinguishes between Nature and Fortuna, *Decam.*, VI, ii (*ibid.* III, 129): "La natura apparecchiando ad una nobile anima un vil corpo, o la fortuna apparecchiando ad un corpo dotato d'anima nobile vil mestiero. . . . E certo io maladicerei e la natura parimente e la fortuna."

¹⁴⁸ Page 3. See also pp. 273 ("Deum summa veneratione," etc.), 154 ("Huius pueritiam," etc.).

¹⁴⁹ See headings to I, iv; I, xiii; II, v; etc.

¹⁵⁰ See the introductory poems; also pp. 98 ("Fortuna tamen rebus," etc.); 15 ("Dum igitur"), 38 ("qui suam similiter"), 249 ("fortunam minari," her blows), 26 ("ut ignominioso"), 78 ("non minus reliquis"), 246 ("fortunae iacula"), etc., etc.;

theme (with examples) perfected to the highest degree; but let us consider only Boccaccio's attitude toward the goddess. In the sixth book the author has a colloquy with her, and there she expresses her nature fully as Boccaccio conceived it:

She is not an attractive creature. She has a cruel appearance. She tells him his labors are in vain if he thinks to bring against her any remedy, although philosophers of old have tried to do so. Boccaccio replies that he is working for the glory of God, and wishes to inquire into the secrets of the world, to fly beyond the planets for the clue to the universe. He has come to Fortune for the subjects of his stories. She answers that men have painted her as obstinate, hard, foolish, and blind, because they cannot see the secrets of the heavens; they themselves are blinded by the desire of worldly wealth.¹⁵¹ She can, however, furnish stories, etc. The summary reveals that Boccaccio probably had the Christian conception in his own mind; but, so far as specific statement is concerned, there is at best a compromise.¹⁵²

In the *De Genealogia Deorum* as well, Boccaccio seems to be thinking of the Christian Fortune:

Lachesi poi cognominata dal fine: percioche anco Iddio hà dato il suo fine alle cose c' hanno a venire. . . . Sono appresso di quelli, che vogliono Lachesi esser quella, che noi chiamiamo Fortuna.¹⁵³

But this is not Boccaccio's own view necessarily, for he only mentions it as the idea of some of his contemporaries.

for longer discussions, see pp. 60 ff. (Poverty and Fortune), and 146 ff. (lib. VI, cap. i). See also the first sentence of Couteau's edition: "Quant ie considere et pense en diverses manieres les plorables malheuretez de noz predecesseurs . . . qui par fortune ont este trebuschez," etc.; the title of Lydgate's translation, (1558 ed.) "The tragedies, gathered by Ihon Bochas, of all such Princes as fell from theyr estates throughe the mutability of Fortune"; and the introductions to the foreign translations in general (Hortis, *Studj sulle Opere Latine*, pp. 821 ff.)

¹⁵¹ Lib. VI, cap. i.

¹⁵² The Christian goddess was, however, easily deduced. See Laurent de Premierfait: "Fortune, qui comme chamberiere de dieu pour la punicion de leurs pecchiez une foiz haulse et aultre foiz abaisse hommes et femmes sanz discretion ne adviz" (Hortis, *Studj sulle Opere Latine*, Append. IV, p. 732).

¹⁵³ Giuseppe Betussi's trans. p. 11. This is "allegorical" to Boccaccio. He discusses the interpretations of the gods. ("Da Lachesi viene raccolto, e allungato in vita," p. 10 verso), and in the discussion of Fate (p. 11) refers to Boethius. There is something like the Christian Fortuna in a passage in the *Decameron*, IX, ii (*Opere*, IV, 156), where Fortuna acts judiciously; but cf. with this, *Decam.*, IV, i (*ibid.* II, 158).

Perhaps we shall find his real views in his commentary on the famous passage concerning Fortuna in Dante:

Il che qui l'autore usa mostrando la fortuna aver sentimento e deità; conciosiacosachè come appresso apparirà, questi accidenti non possano avvenire in quella cosa la quale qui l'autore nomina fortuna, se poeticamente fingendo non s'attribuiscono: dalle quali fizioni è venuto, che alcuni in forma d'una donna dipingono questo nome di fortuna, e fascianle gli occhi, e fannole volgere una ruota, siccome per Boezio, *de consolatione*, appare.¹⁵⁴

Boccaccio obviously does not give much credit to the "fizioni," since they are only poetic.¹⁵⁵

And yet here again we must seem to risk the charge of impudence, and go beyond the author's own statement of his belief. Boccaccio has Fortuna so often at the tip of his pen that he certainly does not despise the poetic image. He has found her extremely useful to cover the idea of the cause of certain phenomena in human life, and he apparently offers no substitute for her. Let us take the description in the *Amorosa Visione*:

The scene is the interior of a visionary castle. The room has many paintings. One is that of Fortuna, "colei, che muta ogni mondano stato," sometimes glad, sometimes sad. She turns a great wheel toward the left unceasingly. She is deaf, and hears no prayer. She has no law or compact. She says (I imagine her speech): "Let every man who desires, be bold to mount, but when he falls let him not become angry with me. I never deny any the step. Let come who will." I saw men climb with their wits and, arrived at the top, say, "I reign"; others I saw fall to the bottom, and they seemed to say, "I am without reign." One was sad; another glad.

The speaker turns to his lady and says: "This is surely our enemy. She once drew me to the bottom of the wheel. I can never be happy again." The lady replies: "Thou art one of those who desire riches. But behold, she can never make any man truly happy! It is foolish to waste time over earthly possessions. Look upon those who have fallen. See the fall of the city which Cadmus made; see the end of Jocasta, Adrastus, Tideus, Troy, Ilium, Priam, Hecuba, Paris, Troilus, Polydorus, Polixena, Agamemnon, Sennacherib, Aeneas, Turnus, Alexander, Niobe, Cyrus, Persius, Scipio, Asdrubal, Dionysius, Pompey, and Caesar. Now that thou hast seen all earthly things, come to see the eternal."¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁴ *Commento sopra Dante* (*Opere*, XI, 151 ff.; the passage is quoted from pp. 155-6). There is a reminiscence of Dante in the phrase, "L'alta ministra del mondo Fortuna" (*Teseide*, VI, i, *ibid.* IX, 186), and a reference to Boethius in *Teseide*, IV, 12 (*ibid.* 123).

¹⁵⁵ Cf. his *Amorosa Visione*, cap. XXXI (*Opere*, XIV, 127):

Il dir, Fortuna, è un semplice nome;

Il posseder quel ch'ella dà, è vano.

¹⁵⁶ Cap. XXXI onward (*ibid.* XIV, 125 ff.).

This summary, which is not by any means full, may convey some idea of the picture Boccaccio draws in his presentation of Fortuna. In the *Fiammetta*, for example, he gives a splendid elaboration of the apostrophe and complaint,¹⁵⁷ and there are many other passages which I cannot touch on here.

The minor references to Fortuna in the lyric poetry of the period are all to the pagan goddess. Thus, in Fazio degli Uberti (†1367), a follower of the tradition of Dante, we have at most a compromise.¹⁵⁸ Burchiello (1404-1448), a follower of Petrarch, uses the primitive pagan figure:

Ma se Fortuna la mia vela sventola,
Mi farò la minestra colla pentola.¹⁵⁹

And the warning of Petrarch to beware Fortuna Bona is found in a sonnet of Pucci (of the end of the fourteenth century): "(Re) e marchesi in questo mondo ho fatti."¹⁶⁰

II

FEDERIGO FREZZI¹⁶¹

Frezzi's *Quadriregio*, an allegorical poem in imitation of Dante, includes a long descriptive passage placing Fortuna in the realm of Satan:

The author arrives by going through an *aspiro cammin*. He sees Fortuna from a distance: "Mirabil sì, ch'ancor men maraviglio" (p. 147). Minerva warns him to be on his guard against the goddess when Fortuna smiles. She is the lady who tricks many in the world. See how treacherous her demeanor is; her face becomes cloudy, when from on high a man is sunk to earth. "I then saw how tall the lady was, taller than any column. She turned seven large wheels with her hand (like spheres in this world). The fourth was as high as the place from which Jove strikes with his arrows. The rest were smaller. The parts of the wheels that go upward were gilded and precious and fair. Two men sang with lightness of heart at the top, and two sang a contrary song below." Fortuna speaks: "I move the wheel.

¹⁵⁷ Cap. V (*ibid.* VI, 102 ff.).

¹⁵⁸ *Liriche*, ed. Renier, p. 135 ("Poi che fortuna nel viso . . . el forte Marte col voler di Giove"). For his other references, see pp. 7 ff. (canzone I, *contra* Fortuna, praying her to be friendly) and 253, ll. 47-8.

¹⁵⁹ *Sonnetti*, p. 110. See also pp. 26 ("Perchè Fortuna"), 59 ("Istettano"), 140 ("Fortuna, è un caso," and cf. the sonnet on p. 237 to which this one is the answer), 215 ("I' credo che fortuna"); also second pagination, 29 ("Dove poi mi guidò fatale stella: E se ben la Fortuna"), 42 ("E pur che la fortuna").

¹⁶⁰ Sonnet vii, *Poesia*, Ferri's ed., p. 125.

¹⁶¹ † 1416.

None have faith in me. He who goes up and down is Ixion and suffers such penance because he wished to ravish Jove's wife. Bernabo of Milan is on the third circle; his nephew is on another; Renzo Tribuno is on the second." The traveller leaves the scene by climbing a *monte ruinoso*.

Ma quel che vvolo Fortuna, e Dio dispone,
Se Dio non lo rivela, mai si vede
Da intelletto creato, o per ragione.¹⁶²

The Fortune here was obviously meant to be something like the Christian goddess, but she is in fact a curious development of the old demonic idea.

Next it will be worth while, for the sake of brevity, to consider the Italian novelists in a group, widely separated as some of them are chronologically. In the tradition of the novel from Boccaccio, the authors make frequent use of the goddess in their plots, although not quite so liberally as Boccaccio himself. Sercambi (1347-1424) has not many references.¹⁶³ Fortuna, however, takes a prominent part in the Pyramus and Thisbe story.¹⁶⁴ Da Prato, in his *Paradiso degli Alberti* (c. 1420), which has a Classical setting, uses Fortuna among the other gods.¹⁶⁵ Sacchetti (c. 1330-c. 1400) brings the figure vividly into his work.¹⁶⁶ In the latter part of the fifteenth century, Masuccio Salernitano makes freer use of the goddess—always the pagan conception. He has two apostrophes to Fortuna, which are a little more extensive than his other treatment.¹⁶⁷ Jacopo Sannazaro (1458-1530), author of the *Arcadia*, makes more frequent use of Fortuna in his poetry than in his prose.¹⁶⁸ Giovanni Fiorentino (—1378—) introduces two fairly long complaints in verse,¹⁶⁹ and mentions the goddess a number of times in prose. In general it must be said that with the smaller

¹⁶² *Quadriregio*, I, 150, ll. 10-12. The whole passage is in book II, cap. xiii, pp. 147 ff.

¹⁶³ See D'Ancona's ed., p. 103 (novella 13); Renier's ed., pp. 226 (no. 64), 262 (no. 74), etc.

¹⁶⁴ Renier's ed., p. 326 (no. 93).

¹⁶⁵ II, 105; see also 119 ("lieta fortuna che i graziosi iddii conceduti sì ci anno"). For the pagan Fortuna, see pp. 142, 171.

¹⁶⁶ *Novelle*, III, 266, 269.

¹⁶⁷ *Il Novellino*, pp. 342, 439.

¹⁶⁸ Prose: *Opere*, pp. 94, Fortuna and the gods, 46, 52, 95, the pagan Fortuna (all in *Arcadia*). Poetry: pp. 126 (eclogue XII in *Arcadia*), 341 (son. XII), 344 (son. XVIII), etc.

¹⁶⁹ *Il Pecorone*, I, 273 (xiv, 2); II, 37 (xvi, 2).

men the use of Fortuna is extensive, but not so rich as in the more prominent authors; and that it is always the pagan goddess who appears.

The minor poetry of the Italian vernacular includes some instances of fuller treatment. We have a remarkable example of something between the Ecclesiastical remedy and the Christian conception in the *Ballata della Fortuna*.¹⁷⁰ The poem runs as follows:

For the little that Fortune has given me, I thank Him who created the moon; I thank the King of the universe, who exalted Troy and Rome. Fortune made the Pisans great; and putting them down, again raised them. Thus Fortune has turned many on her wheel. We must get used to her, for:

Fortuna nonn' è nulla al mio parere,
anz' è 'l piacier di Dio in tutte cose.

She guides the Church, and is responsible for much harm (as, presumably, God permits evil.)

There are other poems,—of the omnipotence of Fortune,¹⁷¹ and of the Fortune who causes death.¹⁷² And we also have the interesting record of an actual tournament of Reason against Fortune ("contrasto fra la Sapienza e la Fortuna," October 4, 1490),¹⁷³ which, as an example of the remedy of prudence, is worth particular notice. Vecchio asks Fortune and Sapience which of the two is the more powerful in the world. Fortune claims the honor, boasting of her usual tricks,—exalting, debasing, and so on. Sapience, in turn, asserts her power, and says that she too governs the greatness of man. Vecchio is in doubt. The *débat* continues, with a recitation of the examples of prowess on each side. The two contestants choose their champions, and the poetical part of the tournament ceases. It was followed by the actual joust. The hostile parties were marshalled, accompanied by an audience, "seguitando ciascun il suo carro trionfale gridando chi *viva la Fortuna*, e chi *la Sapienza*." The side of Fortuna in this case won: "Et così il dubbio del vecchio restò chiaramente risoluto."

¹⁷⁰ By A. Medin, in *Propugnatore*, 1889, pp. 101 ff. The ballad is dated 1405. Medin (pp. 108 ff.) shows the tradition from Dante; cf. above, note 125. Here Fortuna, however, is not exactly the Christian figure.

¹⁷¹ Bracci, *Canti Carnascialeschi Trionfi*, etc., p. 324.

¹⁷² *Lamenti de' Secoli XIV e XV*, ed. A. Medin, pp. 58 ff.

¹⁷³ The parts were taken by Annibale Bentivoglio, son of Giovanni II, and Niccolò Rangone, the latter's son-in-law.

A great celebration followed; "cominciò il popolo a gridare *viva la fortuna*." ¹⁷⁴ This time the remedy of prudence evidently did not work. So much for the minor poetry, in which Fortuna chiefly appears as the pagan goddess.¹⁷⁵

AENEAS SYLVIVS

Aeneas Sylvius, later Pope Pius the Second (1405-1464), says plainly enough: "Chi negherà essere la fortuna universale regolatrice? Chi è che non ne desideri ardentemente il favore?" But he adds: "Dicono alcuni la fortuna nulla portare sull' animo dei savi: la qual cosa io concedo, se di quei savi si ragiona che della sola virtù si dilettono, i quali eziando nella povertà, o straziati dalle malattie, o chiusi persino nel bue di Falaride, credono posseder vita beata." (But there are few so virtuous.)¹⁷⁶ This is the remedy of prudence. That Aeneas Sylvius was especially interested in Fortuna, is made evident in his *Somnium de Fortuna*, in which he depicts with great detail the home of the goddess.¹⁷⁷

BOIARDO

In the *Orlando Innamorato* the pagan Fortuna plays a large part,¹⁷⁸ and Boiardo (1434-1494) introduces Morgan the Fay with many characteristics of the goddess of chance. Her house, like that of the goddess, is situated on an island. She is called "Fata del Tesoro,"¹⁷⁹ which suggests the Fortune of riches. Her personal description does not contain so much necessarily suggestive of Fortune, but it is suitable enough for her:

Che sempre fugge intorno il piano e'l monte,
E dietro è calva, e' crini ha solo in fronte.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁴ Summarized by Medin, *Ballata*, etc., App. I (*Propugnatore*, 1889, pp. 127 ff.) See also Ghirardacci's *Historia di Bologna*, vol. III (MS.), under the year 1490.

¹⁷⁵ For other examples, see Ferrario's *Poesie Pastorali e Rusticali*, pp. 12, 13, 184, 249; Giusto de Conti's *La Bella Mano*, in *Lirici Antichi*, p. 178.

¹⁷⁶ *Di Due Amanti*, p. 80.

¹⁷⁷ *Pontif. Epist.*, ep. CVIII (*Opera Omnia*, pp. 611 ff.). See other references, *ibid.* 462, 569, 601, 761; *Di Viris Illustribus*, pp. 16, 38; *Di Due Amanti*, p. 29.

¹⁷⁸ See I, i, st. 65; I, iv, 6; I, viii, 24; I, xii, 58, 60, 73, 77; I, xvi, 1 (opening of the canto):

Tutte le cose sotto de la luna,
L'alta ricchezza, e' regni de la terra
Son sottoposti a voglia di Fortuna.

Note a reference to the compromise, II, xiv, 67, "Come volse Fortuna, o Dio beato." See the long passage, I, xxi, 44 ff.

¹⁷⁹ See II, vii, 34.

¹⁸⁰ II, viii, 39.

As Orlando sees her in the garden, she is very beautiful¹⁸¹ (although her hair hangs only from her forehead):

Lei tutti i crini avea sopra la fronte,
La faccia lieta, mobile e ridente;
Atte a fuggire avea le membra e pronte,
Poca treccia di dietro, anzi niente.
Il vestimento candido e vermiglio,
Che sempre scappa a cui gli dà di piglio.¹⁸²

The Fata has the key of the prison in which Rinaldo is held, and Orlando takes her by the forelock to make her surrender it to him. First she escapes, but later he again succeeds in catching her and forcing her to yield.¹⁸³ The moral seems to be hinted early:

Ogni cosa virtute vince al fine,
Chi segue vince, pur che abbia virtute.¹⁸⁴

And the Fata swears by the Demogorgon never after to do him harm.¹⁸⁵ This is a combination of Fortune, Fate, and Occasio. Boiardo thus shows, both by his numerous references elsewhere to Fortuna herself and by her influence here on Morgan the Fay and her house, his intense interest in the goddess. She remains pagan. The Fata Morgana as a figure of the powers of evil gives a hint of the old demonic conception.

LEON BATTISTA ALBERTI

In his general philosophy, Alberti (1404-1472) continues the tradition from Petrarch's *De Remediis*.¹⁸⁶ In *Della Tranquillità dell' Animo* he opposes strength and wisdom to the adversities of Fortune, and his Fortune is a compromise:

La Fortuna buona ben possiamo noi appetire dagli Dii; ma da noi, dal nostro studio, da nostra diligenza impetreremo sapienza, ornamenti d'animo, e lode di ben composta mente. Chiederai nei tuoi casi avversi forse dagli Dii sapienza e virtù. . . . La fortuna per sè, non dubitare, sempre fu e sempre sarà imbecillissima e debolissima, a chi se gli opponga.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸¹ St. 42.

¹⁸² St. 43.

¹⁸³ See II, viii, 54, 57-60; II, ix, 1-20, 26; II, xiii, 29.

¹⁸⁴ II, viii, 55.

¹⁸⁵ II, xiii, 26-7.

¹⁸⁶ Like most of those who use the remedy of fortitude or that of prudence, he employs the dialogue form for his exposition.

¹⁸⁷ Lib. III, *Opere Volgari*, I, 113-114; and cf. 202 (*Avvertimenti Matrimoniali*).

Many times throughout his works the goddess makes an appearance, and most often as the unfavorable deity.

The importance he attributes to Fortuna is best seen in the "Proemio" of his great work, *Della Famiglia*. Here, too, we have the remedy of spiritual devotion. The book, it seems, is partly to investigate how much power this goddess really has: "Spesso solea fra me maravigliarmi e dolermi, se tanto valesse contro agli uomini essere la fortuna iniqua e maligna, e se così a lei fusse con volubilità e temerità sua licito, famiglie ben copiose d'uomini virtuosissimi . . . porle in povertà, solitudine e miseria."¹⁸⁸ Alberti reviews the great examples of those who have sought fame and glory. For such ambition, virtue is of no more value than Fortuna; the way to keep fame and glory is, however, "le buone e sante discipline del vivere."¹⁸⁹ Thus Fortune is weak in contending with virtue, and virtue really should be thought sufficient to gain and hold any lofty position: "Più di certo stimeremo vaglia la ragion che la fortuna, più la prudenzia che alcuno caso."¹⁹⁰ Alberti uses, therefore, first the remedy of prudence and then that of spiritual devotion.¹⁹¹

GIOVANNI GIOVIANO PONTANO

In Giovanni Pontano (1426-1503) we have a curious return to the scholastic discussions. Strangely enough, Pontano considered that Fortune still needed an extensive analysis. In a way, of course, he is only reviving the treatment in the Church Fathers; but he is not popularizing their doctrine, for he writes in Latin. His work *De Fortuna* need not be summarized here, for it merely reviews the old doctrine of the Fathers with their remedy of prudence. "Fortunam non esse Deum," because Fortuna is unjust and robs the meritorious of due reward: "Tyrannorum haec sunt non Dei, cuius est summa bonitas, absoluta iustitia, rectissimum iudicium, aequissima rerum omnium dispensatio."¹⁹² Like Lactantius, Pontano must believe that the universe is founded on a rational order; but he admits that fortuna is a powerful cause

¹⁸⁸ *Opere*, II, 4 ff.; and see 4-5.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.* 6 ff.; for his examples, see p. 10.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.* 15.

¹⁹¹ See the contrast of Virtue and Fortune, *ibid.* III, 34 (*Deiciarchia*, I); the remedy of spiritual devotion, II, 381, (*Della Fam.*, IV); the remedy of fortitude, III, 200 (*Il Teogenio*, I).

¹⁹² *Opera Omnia*, Pars II, pp. 129 ff.; see also 131 v. ff., "Moderatur autem ac regit Deus, quo existunt cuncta, igitur et curam habet universorum," etc.

(since the good do not always prosper), and that it is a cause *ex accidenti*.¹⁹³ It is concerned only with the things about which man has free-will. It differs from Fate, because Fate administers affairs with some order. Boethius, he notes, makes Fate the servant of Providence.¹⁹⁴

In regard to good and bad fortune, Pontano introduces the moral question. A man is properly fortunate only when he is good. The goods of Fortune come from the heavens and the stars. God is the centre of all causes. There is nothing beyond God—and Pontano quotes St. Thomas Aquinas.¹⁹⁵

It might be well to observe in passing that Pontano himself uses the pagan Fortuna in his poetry.¹⁹⁶ Did he think the figure merely Classical "local color"?

III

This bit of philosophy from Pontano brings our study well into the middle of the fifteenth century. Pontano's discussion may be taken as a survival of scholasticism, revealing the temper of the late Medieval attitude in Italy toward Fortuna. The point at which the Renaissance begins is, of course, not clear; but it is marked as a period of great adventure and discovery. It discovered a vast new continent. It found out that the world went round the sun, that the universe did not revolve about the earth, and consequently that man was but an item in the news of the universe. The systematized religion of the Middle Ages seemed doomed to be laid aside as incomplete, because it did not include definite explanations of the vast new wonders. The science of its devotees was manifestly wrong. The foundation for future sects and new creeds was laid in the work of Wycliffe, Huss, Melancthon, and Luther, and the individual right of man to set up his own faith was proclaimed. In many ways, therefore, the intellectual and spiritual life was like that of the Golden Age in Rome. The new life implied the rebirth of distrust and scientific skepticism. The interest was again in the unknown.

LORENZO DE' MEDICI

Throughout the poetry of Lorenzo de' Medici (1449-1492),

¹⁹³ Pages 130v.-136. He refers to Aristotle (pp. 132, 133v., 136v., etc.).

¹⁹⁴ Pages 139v.-140.

¹⁹⁵ Pages 173v.-175.

¹⁹⁶ *Carmina*, I, 28 (ll. 877 ff.), 38 (l. 58, with an echo of Ovid, I, i), 66 (l. 1032), 91 (l. 507); II, 392 (xxx, ll. 9-10), 393 (ll. 25-6).

Fortuna remains consistently the pagan goddess, except in one passage:

Or servo e prigion son io e i miei figli;
Se la Fortuna ministra di Dio
Questa ha voluto, ognuno esempio pigli.¹⁹⁷

These verses involve a reminiscence both of Boethius and of Dante, and are probably not very significant for Lorenzo's general conception of the goddess, since his work, in quality and spirit, belongs so entirely to the later period. In his other allusions to the goddess, which, to be sure, are not very extensive (except the bit of macaronic verse "Amico, mira ben questa figura")¹⁹⁸ he uses always the pagan figure; and, as in the case of Petrarch and especially in that of Boccaccio, she is often concerned with love.¹⁹⁹

POLITIAN

Angelo Ambrogini (1454-1494), known as Poliziano, continues the style of Lorenzo de' Medici and is closely related to him. In his works there is a *Tenzzone d'Amore e di Fortuna*, to which Lorenzo de' Medici, Girolamo Benivieni, and Pandolfo Collenuccio contributed. The theme is as follows:

Love, says Lorenzo de' Medici, gives comfort when sighs come forth "come vuol mia dura sorte"; Fortune sees the sighs and takes them to add to my sufferings; I fool her, however, for Love brings sweetness. Pandolfo replies: Love and Fortune are joined against you. Poliziano says: Love mitigates the effects of Fortune; Love is stronger and stimulates the sufferer. Benivieni answers: Fortune keeps your attention on the sad effects alone; sweet is the grief, however, as sweet was the cause.²⁰⁰

This pleasant and sugary wrangling is typical of the attitude of these poets toward Fortuna. They are as little concerned with Christian ethics as with philosophizing in general. Poliziano also makes frequent use of the pagan Fortuna who controls love affairs.²⁰¹

BENIVIENI

The pagan goddess appears again in the poetry of Benivieni

¹⁹⁷ *Opere* (1825), III, 38 (*La Rappresentazione*).

¹⁹⁸ *Poesie*, (1801), p. 169.

¹⁹⁹ *Opere*, (1825), I, 10 (son. viii), II (son. ix), etc.

²⁰⁰ Poliziano, *Le Stanze, l'Orfeo*, etc., Carducci's text, ed. Donati, 1910, pp. 230-33.

²⁰¹ See Carducci's ed., 1863, pp. 85 ff. (*La Giostra*, II, st. 34 ff.), 143 (ll. 164 ff.) 155 (ll. 366 ff.), etc.

(†1542), and his friends.²⁰² It is natural that Fortuna should have a place in a work like *Dela Vanita Inganni et Superbia del Mondo*.²⁰³ Her gifts, while she is pagan and often when she is Christian, are merely vanities.

PICO DELLA MIRANDOLA

In his work *In Astrologiam*, Pico della Mirandola (1463-1494) echoes the doctrines and decisions of the Church Fathers and of Aristotle:²⁰⁴

Fortunam verò cùm dico, coelum non dico, sed eam causam . . . quam vulgò fortunam dicimus, atque his verbis solemus exprimere, ita sors tulit, ita evenit, ita res cecidit, per quam fit ut ludentes afferis, aut iaciant quod volunt, aut quod non volunt . . . quam per se nec dependere de coelo, nec idem esse quod fatum, nec providentiae derogare divinae, et quid demùm aut esse, aut non esse possit.²⁰⁵

He shows that fortuitous events do not depend on the heavens;²⁰⁶ and he touches on the Aristotelian *causa per accidens*, and the need of postulating consciousness and free-will in what we call chance events. By way of illustration, he tells the story of a man digging a ditch and accidentally discovering a treasure. Finally, he decides that people err who deny the existence of Fortuna entirely.²⁰⁷ The passage is worth quoting as a late justification of the Christian Fortuna:

Si igitur curant humana dii (sic enim loquimur) ut custodes angelos, et intelligentium causarum serium ordinem complectamur Dei veri consilio providentiaeque famulantem. . . . Vulgatissimum est exemplum de servis eòdem missis à Domino, ut convenirent ignaris tamen Domini voluntatis, quorum conventus atque concursus ipsis servis inopinatus atque fortuitus, Domino praevisus et praeordinatus est. Sic procurans utilitatem pauperis agricolae custos angelus potest ad eum locum effodiendum invitare motibus occultis, ubi novit angelus esse thesaurum, ut quod pauperi fuit fortuna, consilium tamen angelo fuerit. Hoc respiciens Aurelius Augustinus quinto de Civitate Dei libro, non inquit causas quae dicuntur fortuitae, unde et fortuna nomen accepit, nullas esse dicimus, sed latentes easque tribuimus vel veri Dei vel quorumlibet spirituum voluntati: Dixit quorumlibet spirituum quoniam tam à bonis hoc fieri potest quàm angelis malis, licet non omnia

²⁰² *Opere*, pp. 81 (egl. i), 103v. (egl. vi), 109v. (egl. viii), 261v. (really 201v., *Frottole pro Papa Leone in renovatione ecclesie*). See also 126v. (M. Domenico Benivieni a l'Autore).

²⁰³ *Ibid.* 154v.

²⁰⁴ Lib. III, cap. xxvii (*Opera*, I, 349, Aristotle and Boethius; 351, St. Thomas Aquinas).

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.* 350-351.

²⁰⁶ Lib. IV, cap. ii, "Fortuita à coelo non esse" (*ibid.* 353).

²⁰⁷ Lib. IV, cap. iii (*ibid.* 354).

possint mali quae boni, nec idem utrisque finis: sed bonis quidem commune hominum bonum, malis verò malum, frustrante illorum tamen malitiam bonitate divina, dum in bonum ordinat redigitque quicquid ab illis mala fuerit voluntate patratum.²⁰⁸

This theory presents the tradition of the demonic as well as of the angelic Fortuna.²⁰⁹

PULCI

In the *Morgante Maggiore*, Pulci (1432-1484) often refers to the pagan Fortune. She is nearly always unfavorable, and the author or the speaker feels weak before her powers:

Però non facciam mai ignun disegno,
Ch'un altro non ne faccia la fortuna,
E dà sempre nel brocco a mezzo il segno
Sanza pietà, senza ragione alcuna:
Questa persegue i buon, perchè gli ha a sdegno,
Infin che v'è de le barbe sol' una;
E fa de' matti savj, e i savj matti;
E chi prestar vorrebbe, ch' egli accatti.²¹⁰

This hardly allows a Christian interpretation.²¹¹ Even in a prayer to the Virgin, Pulci has no hesitation in saying:

La fortuna che sue rote gira,
M'ha qui condotto con gli sproni in mano,
E di me fatto il berzaglio e la mira.²¹²

LODOVICO ARIOSTO

Ariosto (1474-1533) introduces plenty of traditional Fortuna material into the *Orlando Furioso* and elsewhere in his verse. She is always pagan.²¹³ He gives over long passages to her, and also briefly notices her activities. His use of the complaint is especially effective:

Oimè, Fortuna fella,
Dicea, che cambio è questo che tu fai?
Colei che fu sopra le belle bella,

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.* See also vol. II, 372-3 (*De Rerum Praenotione*, lib. V, cap. viii).

²⁰⁹ He refers (II, 372) to Proclus Platonius defining Fortuna as a demonic power.

²¹⁰ Canto XXI, 82.

²¹¹ See the weakness in Canto XXVIII, 150.

²¹² Canto XVII, 2.

²¹³ See, however, the interesting lines:

Presaga che quel giorno esser rubella
Dovea Fortuna alla cristiana fede (*Orl. Fur.*, I, x).

Ch' esser meco dovea, levata m'hai.
 Ti par ch' in luogo et in ristor di quella
 Si debba por costei ch' ora mi dai?
 Stare in danno del tutto era men male,
 Che fare un cambio tanto diseguale.²¹⁴

Fortune usurps the function of Death:

Colei che di bellezze e di virtuti
 Unqua non ebbe, e non avrà mai pare,
 Sommessa e rotta tra gli scogli acuti
 Hai data ai pesci et agli augei del mare;
 E costei che dovria già aver pasciuti
 Sotterra i vermi, hai tolta a preservare
 Dieci o venti anni più che non dovevi,
 Per dar più peso agli mie' affanni grevi.²¹⁵

Fortuna appears on every occasion with great vitality, and takes an active part in many scenes.²¹⁶

PIETRO BEMBO

Bembo (1470-1547) discusses at length, in the prose of *Gli Asolani*, the opposition of strength to Fortuna:

Più si conviene calpestando valorosamente la nemica fortuna ridersi e beffarsi de' suoi giuochi, che lasciandosi sottoporre a lei per viltà piagnere e rammaricarsi a guisa di fanciullo ben battuto. E se pure egli ancora non ha dagli antichi maestri tanto di sano avvedimento appreso, o seco d'animo dalle culle recato, che egli incontro a' colpi d'una femmina si possa, o si sappia schermire, che femmina pare che sia la fortuna, se noi alla sua voce medesima crediamo, assai avrebbe fatto men male.²¹⁷

Here is the recognition of a formulated philosophy among the "antichi maestri" concerning Fortune's function and character. The *maestri* may be merely the Classical authors, but they may also represent the whole line of tradition of the remedy of fortitude, which is uppermost here.

In the same work Bembo pauses to debate whether the love of wealth or Fortuna herself is the cause of our grief at the loss of riches.²¹⁸ This seems to us moderns a more or less idle discussion,

²¹⁴ *Ibid.* XX, cxxxii.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.* cxxxiii.

²¹⁶ See, for long treatments, the two apostrophes, *ibid.* VIII, xl-xliv, lxii; *Rime e Satire*, son. I (on love); etc.

²¹⁷ *Degli Asolani*, lib. ii (*Opere*, I, 95-6).

²¹⁸ *Ibid.* 101: "E posto che il cadere in basso stato a coloro solamente sia nojoso, i quali dell' alto son vaghi, non perciò l'amore, che alle ricchezze o agli onori portiamo, siccome tu dicesti, ma la fortuna, che di loro si spoglia, ci fa dolere."

but it illustrates how often Fortuna was in the mind of the fifteenth century.²¹⁹

TRISSINO

Trissino (1478-1550) feels he has little strength against Fortuna. But with him, after all, she is hardly more than a compromise:²²⁰

Ma chi può contrastare a la fortuna?²²¹

And then:

Quei, ch' ebber possanza
Maggiore, e fur più cari a la fortuna;
Dicea l'Angel di Dio.²²²

He wrote a long and remarkable apostrophe to the goddess, which gathers up all the previous themes of the pagan Fortuna. His references to her always show particular interest.²²³

The other poets who fall at the end of the fifteenth century, or in the early part of the sixteenth, may conveniently be considered together. They refer consistently to the pagan figure. Benedetto Gareth (1450-1514) has a fine sonnet with material already familiar to us in other poets,²²⁴ and he has several minor references. De Jennaro (of the end of the fifteenth century) alludes to the goddess a few times.²²⁵ A remarkable poetic treatment, with the use of the remedy of spiritual devotion, is found in Fregoso's *Dialogo di Fortuna* (1521), which falls a little outside of my period, but which is so striking as to be worth special notice:

The poem begins with the complaint that Fortuna has always been churlish to the author: She cannot give me another blow. Why does God so torture my life (if there is a ruler of the heavens)?

Ma non mi puo caper ne l'intelletto
Che la Fortuna volontate sia

²¹⁹ See, for other references in Bembo, *ibid.* 52, 53, 65, 73, 146 (all in *Degli Asol.*); *Rime*, 87 (son. XCV), 88 (son. XCVII), 94 (son. CIX), 187 (capit. V).

²²⁰ See *Tutte le Opere*, I, 303, 319 (Sofonisba).

²²¹ *Italia Liberata*, I, 316 (lib. viii).

²²² *Ibid.* 337 (lib. ix).

²²³ See *ibid.* I, 340; II, 244; III, 156; *Tutte le Opere*, I, 303, 314, 321 (all in *Sofonisba*); 360, 361 (*Serventese*).

²²⁴ *Il Charileo*, ed. Percopo, p. 45 (son. XXXVI, "Mutabile, inconstante, impia fortuna").

²²⁵ *Il Canzoniere*, ed. Barone, pp. 324 (no. 78), 375 (no. 102, and see the answer of Antonello de Petrucchi, p. 377, son. XXXIV).

Del sommo Giove come alcuni han detto
Dio dunque ingiusto, e instabile seria.

Some urge us to rule Fortune by wisdom, but I stand as a reef beaten by the waves.

The speaker's friend replies: I shall help you like a doctor. I tell you the stars have power over the body but not over the soul. The earthly passions are in Fortune's power, but not Virtue.

Così chi de Fortuna se innamora,
In vista bella, in fatti travagliosa
Il verme ha sempre dentro.

Even while the speaker and his friend are talking, a naked woman rises like a swan from the waves. She is of radiant beauty. Necessity leads her to appear. She is the daughter of Time; her mother was Experience. She is Truth, an immortal goddess. She has a son who is persecutor of all her sect, and is called *Odio*. He has become a friend of *Ignorantia*, who is blind and foolish and opposes this fair goddess. Truth has appeared to teach who Fortune really is. *

The two walk with her while she discusses the problem. She says that Fortuna is daughter of Human Judgment and Opinion:

Dal giudicio di saggi over di stolti
De tutto el mondo la Fortuna pende
Come in essempli alcun hanno recolti.

Riches and honor are Fortune's goods. Her gifts are not enduring. She says that Fortuna differs from chance in that she does not proceed from the stars, but from human intent. Man has free-will, which is necessary for the creation of vice and virtue.

They come to the palace of Fortuna. The prudent and the strong win entrance. The riches within only create more desire.²²⁶

So Fortuna again has control of worldly possessions only and the moral of the poem is in its emphasis on spiritual devotion.

In 1502 an interesting entertainment was given for the pleasure of Lucrezia Borgia. The comedy of the *Menaechmi* was preceded by a kind of pageant, setting forth the contest between Virtù and Fortuna. Juno sends Fortuna to combat with Hercules, who succeeds in overcoming and binding her. Juno comes to Fortuna's rescue and bids Hercules to release her. He obeys on condition that neither Juno nor Fortuna ever do harm to the house of Hercules or of Borgia henceforth.²²⁷ Virtù here seems to mean merely physical

²²⁶ The dialogue (which is unpagged except by signature letters) is between Bartholomeo il Simoneta and Curtio Lancino.

²²⁷ D'Ancona, *Origini del Teatro Italiano*, II, 74. D'Ancona refers to Gregorovius's *Lucrezia Borgia*, trans. R. Marino, Firenze, 1874, p. 414, and to Alvisi's *Cesare Borgia*, Imola, 1878, p. 235.

strength embodied in the prowess of Hercules, and consequently this seems to be only the remedy of fortitude.

MACHIAVELLI

Niccolò Machiavelli (1469-1527) gave particular attention to Fortuna. His utilitarian spirit evidently thought all the discussions up to his time unsatisfactory; the "compromise" was to him no explanation, and he was not interested in the poetic Christian conception. He investigated the case of Fortuna in ancient Rome, and gives a good summary of conditions there, mentioning the temples and commenting on Livy's account.²²⁸ According to ancient opinion, "Il popolo Romano nello acquistare l'imperio fusse più favorito dalla fortuna, che dalla virtù"; but with this Machiavelli is not in agreement, holding that the Romans were finally indebted to their own efforts.²²⁹

He seriously considers the subject of Fortuna again in *Il Principe* and permits Fortuna's existence philosophically:

Many have held in the past and still hold that the world is controlled by the Divine power and by Fortune, and that consequently there is no free-will: "Al che pensando io qualche volta, mi sono in qualche parte inchinato nella opinione loro. Nondimanco perchè il nostro libero arbitrio non sia spento, giudico potere esser vero, che la fortuna sia arbitra della metà delle azioni nostre, ma che ancora ella ne lasci governare l'altra metà o poco meno a noi." Fortuna goes where there is no organized resistance or valor to withstand her. Italy is an open country to her. Ruin comes from depending too much on Fortuna. One must use wisdom and conform to the spirit of the times.²³⁰ It depends on the times whether the rash win and the prudent fail. The cautious man may not strike at the proper moment. Impetuosity is, in general, better than caution: "Perchè la fortuna è donna, ed è necessario volendola tener sotto, batterla ed urtarla; e si vede che la si lascia più vincere da questi, che da quelli che freddamente procedono. E però sempre, come donna, è amica de' giovani, perchè sono meno rispettivi, più feroci, e con più audacia la comandano."²³¹ Greatness comes from conquering the goddess.²³²

²²⁸ See Livy I, 46, etc.; and see Roscher's references to him.

²²⁹ *Discorsi sopra le Deche di Tito Livio*, II, i (*Opere*, IV, 223).

²³⁰ Cf. *Discorsi*, III, ix (*ibid.* V, 60): "Donde ne nasce che in un uomo la fortuna varia, perchè ella varia i tempi, ed egli non varia i modi."

²³¹ *Il Principe*, Cap. XXV (*ibid.* V, 301 ff.); cf. Bembo, p. 223 above. Chapter VIII of *Il Principe* discusses how one can sometimes rise, not by Fortune or virtue, but simply by base means. Chapter XV is on the resistance of strength to Fortune,

²³² "I principi diventano grandi quando superano le difficoltà e le opposizioni che sono fatte loro, e però la fortuna, massime quando vuole far grande un principe nuovo, il quale ha maggior necessità di acquistiar riputazione che uno ereditario, gli fa nascere dei nemici," etc. (*Il Principe*, cap. xx).

When Machiavelli employs Fortuna for more artistic purposes, she acquires a peculiar and very real vitality.

For example:

O fortuna, tu suoi pure, sendo donna, essere amica de' giovani; a questa volta tu se' stata amica dei vecchi! Come non ti vergogni tu ad avere ordinato, che sì delicato viso sia da sì fetida bocca scombavato.²³³

And again:

Ma perchè il pianto all 'uom fu sempre brutto,
Si debbe a' colpi della sua fortuna
Voltar il viso di lacrime asciutto.²³⁴

Although the familiar formulae appear again in these lines, a genuine passion gives life to them.

With similar strength, Machiavelli voices a triumphant pæan to the majesty of the goddess, and he includes a brief description of her dwelling-place. So, materialist and skeptic, he subscribes with full accord to the traditional pagan view:

With what verses shall I sing of Fortune's realm, and her prosperous and adverse chances? How injuriously she judges us below, all the world which is gathered beneath her throne! Giovanni Battista, thou canst not and need'st not fear any blows but hers. She is often accustomed to oppose with greater force where she sees nature is of most power. She sways all; she is ever violent unless unusual virtue extinguish her power. Consider these verses, and let the cruel goddess also read what I write of her.

Many call her omnipotent. Often she holds the good under her feet and exalts the wicked. She gives the unworthy a throne, subjects Time to her will, and does not continue her favor to any one. We know not what her ancestry is, but everyone including Jove is afraid of her power. Above is a palace (which is described). She gives to him whom she loves. (A curious conception of *several wheels* of Fortune is introduced here.) Fortune changes the course of the world. Few have been happy in the past, and those died before their wheel turned back or, whirling, bore them low.²³⁵

To the opportunist, the ruling goddess of chance is a very real spirit, and in the last analysis Machiavelli allows human free-will hardly its "moiety of power" over man's destiny.²³⁶

²³³ *Clizia*, IV, i (*Opere*, VII, 146).

²³⁴ *Dell' Asino d'Oro*, cap. iii (*ibid.* 341).

²³⁵ *Capitolo di Fortuna* (*ibid.* 366 ff.).

²³⁶ For other references, see *Discorsi*, lib. ii, iii (*ibid.* IV, 222, 287; V, 60, 128); *Commedia*, II, iv (*ibid.* VII, 178); also *ibid.* VII, 324, 349, 385, and notice 330,—

I varj casi, la pena e la doglia

* * * * *

Canterò io, purchè fortuna voglia.

GUICCIARDINI

The successor of Machiavelli, Francesco Guicciardini (1483-1540), continues the belief in the pagan Fortuna:

Chi considera bene non può negare che nelle cose umane la fortuna ha grandissima potestà, perchè si vede che a ogn' ora ricevono grandissimi moti da accidenti fortuiti, e che non è in potestà degli uomini nè a prevedergli nè a schifargli; e benchè lo accorgimento e sollecitudine degli uomini possa moderare molte cose, nondimeno sola non basta, ma gli bisogna ancora la buona fortuna.

Again:

Coloro ancora, che attribuendo il tutto alla prudenza e virtù escludono quanto possono la potestà della fortuna.²³⁷

Fortune and Virtue are equal powers.²³⁸ This explanation is Machiavelli's from another point of view, for *Virtù* seems to mean strength,²³⁹ and the remedy is less that of spiritual devotion than that of fortitude.

Guicciardini does, however, offset Fortuna with another deity²⁴⁰ apparently the Christian God. It seems likely from his discussion that he believed in Fortuna and thought it wise to include another god for the sake of optimism. In pagan times, as we have seen, there was always a remedy for the afflictions of pure chance.

IV

This study of Guicciardini completes our examination of the problem of Fortuna in Italy through the Middle Ages. In the literature from Dante's time to the Renaissance there were those who, like Petrarch, attempted to annihilate the goddess. There were others who, taking the hint from Dante, retained her as a poetic figure. Philosophy has always tried to annihilate her and poetry has sought to keep her, whether subservient or not to a greater Deity. One philosopher alone, Pico della Mirandola, justifies the poetic conception of the Christian figure. Giovanni Pontano sounds the last note of the uncompromising Ecclesiastical

²³⁷ *Ricordi Politici e Civili*, xxx, xxxi (*Opere Ined.*, I, 97 ff.).

²³⁸ See *Discorsi Politici*, v, vi (*ibid.* 270, 271-2).

²³⁹ Compare the pageant above, p. 225. See, here, *Disc. Polit.*, viii (*ibid.* 288): "Cognosciuto molte volte la virtù o la fortuna degli Spagnuoli essere maggiore che la sua."

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.* 330, 373; cf. 394, "La prudenza e i buoni consigli degli uomini non sono sufficienti a resistere nè alla volontà di Dio, nè alla potestà della fortuna."

philosophy. And then, with the beginning of the Renaissance, in the work of Machiavelli and Guicciardini we have indication that philosophically the goddess will be allowed to remain, entirely free from any other deity and certainly independent. With them the opposition of "*Virtù*" means rather the opposition of physical strength. Pulci and Trissino actually feel weak in the face of her powers. The movement is a return to the pagan faith in the goddess, with only the pagan remedy of fortitude. It is significant that in 1512, when Massimiliano Sforza entered Milan, he was greeted by an elaborate allegorical arch on which Fortuna, the chief figure, towered above Fama, Speranza, Audacia, and Penitenza.²⁴¹

But how far did any one in the Middle Ages or the Renaissance, indeed at any time after the introduction of Christianity, believe in an actual goddess of Fortune such as we find so often described in the literature of these periods? That a survival like this would be impossible can be maintained only by one who holds that Christianity succeeded in making a complete conversion of everybody, or by one who hesitates to think that human beings cherish faith in any god at all. The figure of Fortuna simply represents the expression of one human attitude toward the controlling forces of the universe. There is abundant evidence that a belief in chance lasted during the Middle Ages and gained strength at the time of the Renaissance. From the many examples of the personification in literature there is also sufficient evidence that it was possible to conceive of this element of chance in terms of a goddess. How far the belief in chance and the use of the personification overlapped, it is, of course, impossible to say. The degree to which the personification becomes the personal deity will depend on the extent to which the individual is accustomed to conceive of superhuman powers in human terms: an extent which, to say the least, is far from negative in most of human kind. The problem, in other words, is purely individual. Yet the extraordinary vitality of Fortuna after she has left Roman literature (surviving cheerfully one annihilation after another), her rich equipment which is the gift of no single poet but a general inheritance, her serene course, her renewed vigor and the burst of splendor with which she greets

²⁴¹ Burckhardt, *Civilisation of the Renaissance in Italy* (Middlemore's trans.), p. 421, n. 3.

the Renaissance, such characteristics seem to imply that her vividness carried over into the religion of at least one element among the people.

The unimaginative as well as the unrational will ever see the universe swayed only by chance; the imaginative will personify this force; the intellectual and the scientific will keep faith in a hidden order; the intellectual gifted with due imagination will perceive a rational Deity in control of the apparent element of chance. Fortuna can survive as a pagan deity as long as the purely imaginative survive or the romanticists. She is a favorite during romantic periods. The cult of flux and change, of the strange and the unusual, of him who is *desideroso veder cose nuove*, favors the special adoration of her who is "of chaunges newe lady and princesse."²⁴² Under Christianity she is able to keep only a subordinate rôle. But her tradition with numerous references and descriptions is impressive at all times, and her infinite variety always finds some devotees. Such is her career, at least in Italy, in the radiant human comedy and tragedy of many centuries.

²⁴² Lydgate, *Falls of Princes*, VI, i, st. 30.

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Smith College Studies in Modern Languages

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VOLUME IV

OCTOBER, 1922—JULY, 1923

NORTHAMPTON, MASS.
SMITH COLLEGE

PARIS
LIBRAIRIE E. CHAMPION

Published Quarterly by the
Departments of Modern Languages of Smith College

JAN 16 1924

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THE KNIGHT OF CURTESY AND THE FAIR LADY
OF FAGUELL

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THE KNIGHT OF CURTESY AND THE FAIR LADY OF FAGUELL

A STUDY OF THE DATE AND DIALECT OF THE POEM AND ITS
FOLKLORE ORIGINS

BY

ELIZABETH McCAUSLAND, M. A.

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11

PRINTED AND BOUND BY
GEORGE SANTA PUBLISHING CO.
MANUFACTURING PUBLISHERS
MENASHA, WISCONSIN

PREFACE

This study was undertaken at the suggestion and under the direction of Associate Professor Howard R. Patch of Smith College, and presented as a thesis to complete the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts. I wished to make accessible a romance which at present can be read only in the rather rare collections of Ritson, Hazlitt, and Child, and to study its relations to its literary background. The points which I particularly desired to determine were the date and dialect of the poem and its literary source. In retrospect the problem seems worthy of the research which has gone to the making of this study; for, in the first place, since the development of the *Knight of Curtesy* from French material is typical of the history of the majority of Middle English romances, this fact serves to reinforce current theories as to the influence of French on English literature. In the second place, the Legend of the Eaten Heart is so widespread in folklore and in European tales that a study of its Middle English metrical representative was needed to complete the history of its development.

My thanks are due to Dr. Patch, who has continually advised and criticised my investigations; to Miss Dunham of the Smith College Library, who has assisted me by obtaining a rotographic copy of the romance from the British Museum, and by securing such material as I required for my introductory study; and to Mr. Briggs of the Widener Memorial Library of Harvard University, who generously granted me free access to that library's resources.

ELIZABETH MCCAUSLAND.

Wichita, Kansas,
August 28, 1922.

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41)

INTRODUCTION

I

THE TEXT

The Middle English metrical romance, *The Knight of Curtesy and the Fair Lady of Faguell*, is extant in one black-letter quarto pamphlet of ten leaves, comprising five hundred and four lines, "Imprynted at London by me Wyllyam Copland,"¹ now preserved in the Sheldon collection of the Bodleian Library.² Reprints of the poem appear in Ritson, *Ancient English Metrical Romanceës*,³ Child, *English and Scottish Ballads*,⁴ Hazlitt, *Remains of the Early Popular Poetry of England*,⁵ and Goldsmid's revised edition of Ritson.⁶

II

DATE AND DIALECT

As the evidence shows, this poem is written in the London dialect of the latter part of the fifteenth century. Since there are no allusions in the poem to historical events or references to the poem in contemporary records, this conclusion is based upon linguistic tests:

1. DIALECT

Accented Vowels

a

1. O. E. *æ* becomes *a* or *e*, as in Wycliffe, Lydgate, Capgrave, *et al.*:⁷ *after*, 108; *bad*, 390; (*brast*, 446); *eate*, 435; *fast*, 50; *glade*, 130; *make*, 352; *sad*, 407; *sadly*, 77; *was*, 34.

2. O. E. *æ* becomes *a* or *e*:⁸ *clene*, 92, etc.; *dede*, 415; *dele*, 439; *eche*, 6, etc.; *euer*, 43, etc.; *euermore*, 474; *euery*, 134, etc.; *here* (n.), 178, etc.; *laste*, 52; *lede*, 123; *leest*, 135; *lesse*, 477; *let* (v.), 133; *leue*, 197, etc.; *reders*, 504; *redy*, 166, etc.; *thredes*, 207; *wherof*, 432.

¹ Colophon to the *Knight of Curtesy*, p. 10 of the rotograph.

² Ritson (vol. iii, pp. 353-357) sets the date of the quarto's printing before 1568.

³ Ritson, vol. iii, pp. 193-218.

⁴ Child, vol. i, pp. 188-210. (First Edition: Boston; Little, Brown, and Co.; 1857; 8 vols.) But the Riverside Edition (Boston; Houghton, Mifflin, and Co.) which has no date on the title-page, but which is dated "May 1860" at the end of Professor Child's preface, omits the poem. "Certain short romances which formerly stood in the First Book have been dropped from this Second Edition, in order to give the collection a homogeneous character." (Child, Preface to the Second Edition, p. xvi.)

⁵ Hazlitt, vol. ii, pp. 65-87.

⁶ Revised E. Goldsmid, Edinburgh, 1885, vol. iii, pp. 172-188.

⁷ Dibelius, *Anglia*, xxiii, §32; Wyld, "Dialects in Middle English," *Essays and Studies*, vol. vi, 115, (1).

⁸ Dibelius, §33; Wyld, 116-117, (4), (5); Dibelius, §67, p. 328.

3. O. E. *a* before a nasal remains *a*, as in Wycliffe and Capgrave: ⁹*shame*, 303.
4. O. E. *a* before a nasal and a consonant becomes *a* or *o*:¹⁰ *lande*, 11, etc.; *understande*, 125; *longe*, 313, etc.
5. French *a* before a nasal and a consonant becomes *au*:¹¹ *aduauantage*, 259; *chaunce*, 56; *chaunge*, 99; *daungere*, 268; *graunte*, 468, etc.; *greuaunce*, 54.
6. O. E. *æ*, *a* plus *g*, become *ay*, *ai*:¹² *daie*, 329; *fayre*, 1, etc.; *laye*, 65; *sayd*, 19, etc.; *tayle*, 250, etc.
7. O. E. *ear* plus a consonant becomes *ar*:¹³ *art* (v.), 313.
8. O. E. *eald* becomes *old*:¹⁴ *beholde*, 212; *bolde*, 11, etc.; *colde*, 66; *folde*, 24; *olde*, 9; *tolde*, 113, etc.
9. O. E. *ā* becomes *ō*:¹⁵ *anone*, 18, etc.; *echeone*, 143, etc.; *euermore*, 474; *fo*, 106; *goost*, 389; *hote*, 415; *none*, 159; *nothinge*, 323; *ones*, 295; *othe*, 129; *owne*, 443, etc.; *sore*, 69, etc.; *sory*, 383, etc.; *rode*, 225; *tho*, 406, etc.; *whome*, 41, etc.; *wo*, 54, etc.; *wote*, 230, etc.; *knowen*, 142.

e and i

1. O. E. *ie* becomes *e*, as in Wycliffe:¹⁶ *here* (v.), 481.
2. O. E. *ēr* becomes *er*, as in Wycliffe:¹⁷ *ther*, 106, etc.; *wherof*, 432; *whereuer*, 311; *were*, 161, etc.
3. O. E. *ē* before a dental becomes *e*:¹⁸ *dede*, 466; *mede*, 468; *thredes*, 207.
4. Influence of *r*¹⁹ shows in such words as *harde*, 235; *farre*, 336, etc.; *hartes*, 141.
5. O. E. *ĕo* becomes *ē* in the London dialect in the fourteenth century:²⁰ *ben*, 252; *herie*, 44, etc.; *dere*, 181, etc.; *swerde*, 245, etc.; *depe*, 163, etc.; *erthly*, 463, etc.; *frendly*, 36; *se*, 22, etc.
6. O. E. *ĕ*, *ēo*, plus *g*, *cg*, become *ay*:²¹ *saye*, 67; *slayne*, 171, etc.; *twayne*, 190, etc.
7. O. E. *ēa* plus *g* (as in *ēage*, *hēah*, *nēah*) becomes *ey*, *e*, *ye*, *ie*, *yge*:²² *hye*, 206, etc.; *hie*, 468; *hyghe*, 499; *eyen*, 59, etc.
8. O. E. *ēow* becomes *eu* (*ew*):²³ *trewē*, 425.
9. O. E. *ēaw* becomes *eu* (*ew*):²⁴ *shewe*, 55, etc. (rimed with *true*, 53.)

⁹ Dibelius, §36.

¹⁰ Ibid., §37.

¹¹ Ibid., §38.

¹² Ibid., §40.

¹³ Dibelius, §41; Wyld, *History*, p. 108, §167; Wyld, "Dialects in Middle English," p. 116, (3).

¹⁴ Dibelius, §42; Kaluza, ii, p. 12, §204, 4; Morsbach, p. 16, 7; Wyld, *History*, p. 108, §166; Wyld, "Dialects in Middle English," pp. 115-116, (2).

¹⁵ Dibelius, §44; Kaluza, ii, p. 12, §204, 1; Morsbach, p. 16, 3; Wyld, *History*, 99 ff., §§156-157.

¹⁶ Dibelius, §§51-52; Wyld, *History*, p. 110, §170; Wyld, "Dialects in Middle English," p. 119, (12), (13).

¹⁷ Dibelius §63.

¹⁸ Ibid, §67, 5.

¹⁹ Ibid., §73.

²⁰ Wyld, *History*, p. 109, §168.

²¹ Dibelius, §§77-83.

²² Ibid., §84.

²³ Ibid., §§92-94.

²⁴ Ibid., §95.

10. Anglo-French *ē* (Latin *en*) becomes *ei*, *ay*:²⁵ *absteine*, 184; *mayntayne*, 154; *refrayne*, 61; *susteyne*, 204, etc.
11. Old French *enquerre*²⁶ becomes *enquyre*, 146, etc.
12. French *ai*, *ei*, become *ea* and *ai*:²⁷ *meane*, 132; (*maister*, 401); *certaine*, 412; *payne*, *paine*, 60, etc.

o and u

1. O. E. *ō* does not become *ū* (*ou*, *ow*) in the London dialect until the end of the fifteenth century:²⁸ *coke*, 418; *do*, 133 (rimed with *go*, 298-300); *loked*, 233, etc.; *other*, 367, etc.; *rode* (n.) 495; *sone* (adv.), 29; *toke*, 79, etc. (rimed with *awoke*, 77); *to* (adv.), 187.
2. O. E. *ū* becomes *ou* (*ow*):²⁹ *downe*, 213; *founde*, 70, etc.; *grounde*, 72, etc.; *stounde*, 360; *wounde*, 62, etc.
3. The French verb *mouvoir* becomes *meue*:³⁰ *remeue*, 265.
4. The Old French noun *crois* becomes *crosse*³¹ as in *crosse-waie*, 387.
5. The French words *cort* and *forme* show the two developments of the French *o* through the Anglo-French:³² *court*, 26, and *forme*, 101.
6. Old French *destruire*³³ becomes *distroye*, 124.

y

1. O. E. *ȝ* becomes *ȝ* (*y*), *u*, and *e*:³⁴ *fyre*, 148; *hyll*, 234; *kynde*, 42; *kyssed*, 105; *lylle*, 244; *minde*, 44; *mynde*, 50; *synne*, 306; *burye*, 379; *much*, 108; *kechin* 417.

Consonants and Inflections

1. Certain Middle English words have the Anglo-French suffixes *our* and *oun* (*own*):³⁵ *coloure*, 99; *dolour*, 163; *floure*, 97; *honoures*, 39; *traitour*, 356; *renowne*, 69.
2. O. E. *hw* (which becomes *hu*(*qu*) in the North and *w* in the South) becomes *wh*:³⁶ *whan*, 35; *wherof*, 432; *whereuer*, 311; *where*, 174; *whome*, 41; *while*, 131; *whyche*, 52.
3. The personal endings of the present indicative are: singular, 1.-(*e*), 2.-*est*, 3.-*eth*, -*th*; plural, -(*e*).³⁷ Singular: 1.—*feare*, 63; *forgiue*, 473; *haue*, 187; *praie*, 380;

²⁵ Ibid., §108.²⁶ Ibid., §108(b).²⁷ Ibid., §109.²⁸ Dibelius, §§119-123; Wyld, *History*, p. 106, §163; cf. pp. 138 ff., §236.²⁹ Dibelius, §124.³⁰ Ibid., §125.³¹ Ibid., §127.³² Ibid., §128.³³ Ibid., §129.³⁴ Dibelius, §§130-146; Kaluza, ii, p. 12, §204, 5; Morsbach, p. 16, 6; Wyld, *History*, 101 ff., §158; "Dialects," pp. 118-119, (9-10).³⁵ Dibelius, §§151-152.³⁶ Kaluza, ii, p. 12, §204, 8; Morsbach, p. 17, 15.³⁷ Dibelius, §§155-157; xxiv, 282-286; Kaluza, ii, p. 13, §204, 20; Morsbach, p. 17, B. I.; Wyld, "Dialects," pp. 119-120, (14), (15). The *e* of the first singular and of the plural is not pronounced, as II, Date, 2, below shows.

leue, 288; *tourne*, 289; *dye*, 483; *denye*, 463; *defie*, 356; *thynke*, 299; *desyre*, 296. 2.—*doest*, 383. 3.—*dothe*, 62; *hathe*, 300; *praieth*, 25; *sendeth*, 23; *standeth*, 84; *hath*, 82. Plural, *leue*, 197; *tourne*, 199. There are a few exceptions: first singular, *pray*, 22; *repent*, 471; third singular, *wote*, 230. There is not a single case of *es* in the third person singular.

4. The infinitive drops the final *n* in all cases:³⁸ *bere*, 384, etc.; *breke*, 280; *fynde*, 310; *finde*, 352; *here*, 481; *loue*, 46; *lye*, 72, etc.; *mete*, 231; *slyde*, 264; *unfolde*, 205; *wante*, 436; *wounde*, 62; *wrappe*, 382; *wryte*, 185.

5. Past participles of strong verbs as a rule have lost the *n*:³⁹ *be*, 141; *bore*, 43; *do*, 300; *spente*, 464; *undertake*, 278; *understande*, 125; in a few cases it is retained: *beten*, 210; *ben*, 252; *don*, 495; *knowen*, 142; *slayne*, 171; *slaine*, 132.⁴⁰

6. The O. E. past participle prefix *ge* has disappeared.⁴¹

7. Present participles have the endings, *inge*, *ing*, *yng*, *ynge*, with one exception, *sayenge*, 292.⁴²

8. The pronouns represent the New English spellings with the exception of: *hym*, 20, etc.; *hymself*, 201; *hys*, 272; *mi*, 93, etc.; *myne*, 455; *other* (pl.), 367, etc.; *theyr*, 55, etc.; *thi*, 401; *whome*, 41, etc.; *whyche*, 52, etc.; *ye*, 27, etc.⁴³

9. The Anglo-Saxon noun declensions have been reduced to the typical New English form, nom.—, gen.— (*e*)s, dat.— (*e*), accus.—, plu.— (*e*)s. The nouns, *eyen*, 59, etc., and *fone*, 332, preserve the case-ending of the Anglo-Saxon weak declension.

2. DATE

1. After the beginning of the fourteenth century W. S. *ie* becomes *e* in the London dialect.⁴⁴ Throughout the poem *here* and *herde* represent W. S. *hieran*. This sets the earlier time limit for the poem.

2. That the poem is comparatively late we may infer from the fact that the final *e* is not pronounced. Scansion shows that the *e* is no longer necessary for inflectional purposes. *Grene*, 57, rimes with *eyen*, 59; *bolde*, 11, (an adjective modifying a singular noun) with *olde*, 9, (an adjective modifying a plural noun); *bolde*, 17, (an adjective modifying a singular noun) with *wolde*, 19; *bolde*, 115, (an adjective modifying a singular noun) with *tolde*, 113; *fast*, 50, (an adjective modifying a singular noun) with *laste*, 52, (an infinitive); *longe*, 357, (an adjective modifying a plural noun) with *stronge*, 359, (an adjective modifying a singular noun); *plesaunte*, 434, (an adjective used as the predicate of a singular verb) with *wante*, 436; *wente*, 450, with *sacrament*, 452; *sacrament*, 462, with *spente*, 464. The rimes also indicate the late pronunciation of the vowels: *degre*, 14, rimes with *curtesy*, 16; *departe*, 110, with *herte*, 112; *curtesye*, 149, with *countre*, 151; *undertake*, 278, with *breke*, 280; *se*, 374, with *die*, 376; *true*, 53, with *shewe*, 55.

³⁸ Kaluza, ii, p. 13, §204, 17; Morsbach, p. 17, 19; Wyld, "Dialects," p. 121, (17).

³⁹ Kaluza, ii, p. 13, §204, 18; Morsbach, p. 17, 19; Wyld, "Dialects," p. 120, (16) (1).

⁴⁰ Cf. Morsbach, *Schriftsprache*, pp. 142 ff.; Wyld, "Dialects," p. 120, (16), (1).

⁴¹ Kaluza, ii, p. 13, §204, 19; Morsbach, p. 17, 17; Wyld, "Dialects," p. 120, (16) (2).

⁴² Kaluza, ii, p. 13, §204, 22; Morsbach, p. 17, B. 3; Wyld, "Dialects," p. 121, (18).

⁴³ Kaluza, ii, p. 162, §§319-325; Wyld, "Dialects," pp. 121-122, (19), (20).

⁴⁴ Wyld, *History*, p. 110, §170.

3. Other considerations listed above which set the date toward the end of the fifteenth century are these:

a) O. E. *ð* does not become *ū* until the end of the fifteenth century. Since the poem retains the *o* forms, it can not have been composed much later than the third quarter of the century.

b) The ending *es* for the third person singular of the present indicative is very rare in the London dialect of the time.

c) The fact that pronouns and nouns are no longer declined according to the characteristic Middle English grammar argues for the later date. Note especially the genitive plural *theyr*.

III

HISTORICAL SURVEY

1

Although the *Knight of Curtesy* has been printed in the several collections named in Section I, not one of these editors has studied the folklore origins of the English poem or its relation to European literature. Ritson, Child, and Hazlitt, refer to *Li Roumans dou Chastelain de Couci*,¹ the *Châtelaine de Vergi*,² Boccaccio's novel of Guiscardo and Ghismonda,³ the Biography of the Provençal troubadour Guilhem de Cabestaing,⁴ the story of the Spanish Marquis d'Astorga,⁵ and the *Lai d'Ignaurès*,⁶ are mentioned also. But the development of the Middle English romance from its continental analogues has not been traced. That the story of the eaten heart was current we know from the list quoted by Ahlström:⁷

1. Guirun (cited by Thomas, *Tristan*) about 1150.⁸
2. The Biography of Guilhem de Cabestaing.⁹
3. Linaure, a Provençal troubadour, whose history is referred to by Arnaut Guilhem de Marsan in his *Ensenhamen*. About 1190.
4. *Ignaure*. North French lay.
5. Konrad von Würzburg, *Das Herze*. (Second half of xiii century.)¹⁰
6. Jakemes Makes,¹⁰ *Li Roumans dou Chastelain de Couci*. (End of xiii century.)
7. Story of the count of Ariminimonte in *Cento novelle antiche*.
8. Boccaccio's novel of *Messer Guiglielmo Rossiglione e Messer Guiglielmo Guardastagno*. (*Decamerone*, iv, 9.) About 1350.
9. Boccaccio's novel of *Guiscardo e Ghismonda*. (*Decamerone*, iv, 1.) About 1350.
10. German meister song of Reinmann von Brennenberg and the duchess of Austria.
11. Story in *Sermones parati de tempore et de sancti* (cxix).

¹ Ritson (G), iii, 172; Child, i, 188; Hazlitt, ii, 65. They believe "Curtesy" to be a corruption of "Couci."

² Ritson (G), iii, 173; Child, i, 188.

³ Child, i, 189; Hazlitt, ii, 66.

⁴ Ritson (G), iii, 173; Child, i, 189.

⁵ Child, i, 189.

⁶ Child, i, 189.

⁷ Ahlström, *Studier*, 127-129. Translated by Matzke, M.L.N., xxvi, 1-2.

⁸ Ahlström, 127, "1. Guirun. Bekant i England ca. 1150."

⁹ Sainte-Palaye, *Histoire littéraire des Troubadours*, i, 134-153.

¹⁰ Matzke gives the name of the author of this poem as "Jakemes Makes," (M.L.N., xxvi, 2). Ahlström, from whom Matzke is translating, has the form "Jakemes Sakesep." In the list from which Ahlström compiled the list cited above, Patzig spells the name "Jacemes Sakesep," (*Zur Geschichte der Herzmäre*, 7.) Gaston Paris, whose study in *Histoire Littéraire de la France*, xxviii, 352-390, "Jakemon Sakesep Auteur du Roman du Châtelain de Couci," is the most authoritative investigation of the subject, has established the spelling as "Jakemon Sakesep."

12. Story of the Spanish Marquis d'Astorga and the Countess d'Aulnoys (*Mémoires de la cour d'Espagne*.)
13. Swedish popular song. *Hertig Fröjdenberg* and *Fröken Adelin*.
14. A modern Indian story of the Raja Rasálu.

Patzig¹¹ has a longer list of citations, which also prove the popularity of the story.

2

The question as to what relations exist between these stories has been the subject of great dispute. Before considering the development of the *Knight of Curtesy*, it seems best to summarize briefly the data about the European versions of the Eaten Heart Legend. When he wrote his study of *Li Roumans dou Chastelain de Couci* for the *Histoire Littéraire*,¹² Gaston Paris advanced the theory that the folklore elements in the Old French romance were of Celtic origin.¹³ When, however, the Reverend Charles Swynnerton, a Bengal chaplain, published four legends of the Punjab hero, Raja Rasálu, in the *Folk-Lore Journal*,¹⁴ M. Paris adopted the theory that the story was of oriental origin.¹⁵ This theory Patzig supported in his study, *Zur Geschichte der Herzmäre*. In opposition, Ahlström¹⁶ supported the theory of Germanic origin. Beside these theories as to the folklore source of the legend, they advanced various other hypotheses to trace the development of *Li Roumans dou Chastelain de Couci* from a lost Provençal poem, from Guilhelm de Cabestaing, and from the *Lai de Guirun*. Charts, which follow on the next page, will represent these theories more clearly.¹⁷

None of these explanations, however, seems adequate. In two studies,¹⁸ Matzke advances the following theory:

(1) In the first study Matzke analyzes the similar elements in the Indian story of Rasálu, the Biography of Guilhelm de Cabestaing, and Boccaccio's novel of *Messer Guiglielmo Rossiglione e Messer Guiglielmo Guardastagno*: i. e., the lover is slain by the husband; and the lady kills herself by leaping from the window of the room where the awful meal was eaten. From this analysis Matzke establishes a relation by which both the Indian folk tale and Boccaccio's novel are referred to a common source.

(2) In the second study, Matzke shows that, contrary to the opinion of Beschnidt,¹⁹ who held that the *Chronique* derives from *Li Roumans*, and contrary to that of Gaston Paris,²⁰ who held that the prose is a summary of the romance, the chronicle and the romance are both derived from a common source, which he names Y.

¹¹ Patzig, 6-8. See Appendix to Section III.

¹² Vol. xxviii, 352-90.

¹³ *Romania*, viii, 343-373.

¹⁴ *Folk-Lore Journal*, i, 129-152, "Four Legends of King Rasálu of Sialkot."

¹⁵ *Romania*, xii, 359-363.

¹⁶ *Studier*, 130-143.

¹⁷ Matzke, M.L.N., xxvi, 2.

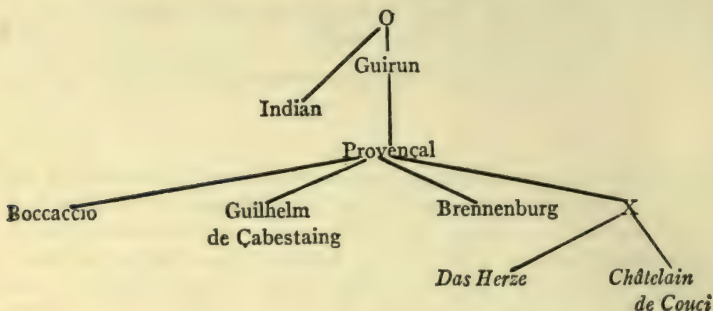
¹⁸ "Legend of the Eaten Heart," M.L.N., xxvi, 1-8. "The Roman du Châtelain de Couci and Fauchet's *Chronique*," A. Marshall Elliott Studies, i, 1-18.

¹⁹ Beschnidt, *Die Biographie des Troubadours Guillem de Cabestaing*, Marburg, 1870.

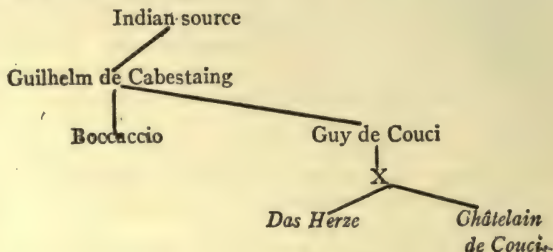
²⁰ *Romania*, viii, 369.

²¹ Hauvette "La 39e Nouvelle du *Décamerone* et la Légende du 'Coeur Mangé,'" *Romania* xli, 184-205.

Paris adopted the following relation:



Patzig's outline is as follows:



Ahlström has the following system:



Hauvette²¹ has another scheme:



That the *Chronique* does not derive from *Li Roumans*, Matzke proves by the following argument:

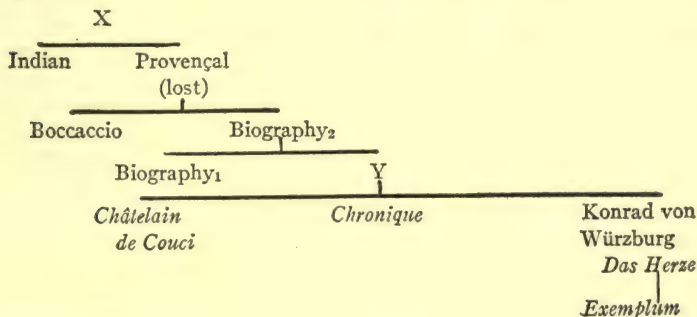
a) The differences in the two versions are fundamental. In the *Chronique* Regnault de Couci is a *chevalier en armes* and of his profession as trouvère there is no hint. The love-token which the lady of Fayel gives him is (not a braid of hair but) "ung las de soye moult bel et bien fait, et y avoit de ses cheveux ouvrez parmi la soye." The arrow which causes his death is not poisoned; and he dies on land and not at sea as in the romance. The letter which he sends with his heart he writes himself. When the heart has been eaten, the lady praises its taste only in response to her husband's question. When she learns the true nature of the food she has eaten, she does not swoon, as does the lady of the romance, but goes to her chamber and there dies of grief. In *Li Roumans* the hero is both trouvère and knight; he is sent on the Crusade by a ruse of the husband; he is wounded *d'une quarel envenimé*; and he dies on the ship which is bearing him home to France. These differences Matzke considers evidence of the existence of another version of the Châtelain de Couci story.

b) That this lost version of the story is older than and independent of *Li Roumans* he believes because the literary form of the poem, namely, the verse *roman d'aventure*, would have prevented the composition of a prose version differing from the metrical romance in such essential details as those outlined above. Since the *Chronique* differs substantially from *Li Roumans*, this proves that the prose is derived from an older version, now lost.

c) In a similar manner he concludes that the arguments which prove that the *Chronique* is not based on *Li Roumans* will hold as proof that *Li Roumans* is not based on the *Chronique*; for the differences which make it impossible to believe that the *Chronique* summarizes the romance make it impossible to believe that the romance followed the outlines of the story as related in the prose *Chronique*.

d) Matzke holds that there is evidence for believing that the older form of the story, which he designates as Y, stood in close relation to the Provençal Biography; for there also the cruel husband is punished by his wife's relatives. Since a closely allied ending is found in the Indian version published by Swynnerton, in the story of the Raja Rasálu, its reappearance can not be accidental.

The conclusions derived from these studies Matzke expresses in the following chart:²²



²² A. Marshall Elliott Studies, i. 18.

SUMMARY: A survey of the material used in studying the *Eaten Heart* Legend shows these points: (1) In folklore there was probably some such source as is called X above. (2) From this source developed an Indian folk tale of Raja Rasálu and a lost Provençal story, which was in turn the ancestor of the novels of Boccaccio and of the *Biography*₂. (3) From *Biography*₂ *Biography*₁ developed, as did also a lost version, known as Y. (4) From Y are derived *Li Roumans dou Chastelain de Couci*, the *Chronique*, and a German tale, *Das Herze*. (5) From Konrad von Würzburg's tale comes an exemplum.

3

The problem which now arises is to establish what relation, if any, exists between the Middle English poem, the *Knight of Curtesy*, and its European parallels. (1) Does the English poem derive from the two French versions? (2) From Boccaccio? (3) What relation exists between the English poem and the *Châtelaine de Vergi*, so that Ritson and Child should refer to the latter in their introductions? (4) Could *Das Herze* or the *Biography* have been the direct source? (5) Is there any evidence of direct influence from Oriental folklore?

The fifth question can be treated briefly. So far as I can see, there are no direct borrowings from the Orient. That the story should have come directly from the East into English literature seems improbable, considering the usual progress of folk tales across the European continent to England.

It seems clear that *Das Herze* was not the source of the English poem; for the outlines of the two plots vary considerably. Moreover French literature exerted a greater influence upon English romance than did the German minnesingers. As for the possibility of the *Knight of Curtesy* deriving directly from a lost Provençal *Biography*, such an explanation seems scarcely reasonable when one considers that the English poem was written at a comparatively late date²³ and that the poet probably had access more readily to the courtly poetry of northern France than to that of Provence, written much earlier.

As to the third question, what relation exists between the *Knight of Curtesy* and the *Châtelaine de Vergi*, there is some confusion. The French poem is widely known²⁴ and deals with the love affair of a knight and the *Châtelaine de Vergi*. The wife of the knight's liege lord, enamored of the knight, entreats his love; when repulsed, she tells her husband that the knight has been annoying her with his advances. To clear himself, the knight reveals to his lord the secret of his love for the *Châtelaine*, which he has sworn never to disclose. After certain complications, (more of sentiment than of plot,) the *Châtelaine* dies of grief because he has broken his word and discovered their love to the world. This story has been connected with the story of the *Châtelain de Couci*, and the lady of Faiel has been identified with Gabrielle, *Châtelaine de Vergi*. From this theory the idea has grown up that the Middle English poem uses material from the *Châtelaine de Vergi*. However I find no proof for such conjectures. Neither the French analogues of the English romance nor the *Knight of Curtesy* itself show traces of such hypothet-

²³ Section II, 2 above.

²⁴ Lorenz, *Die Kastellanin von Vergi in der Litteratur Frankreichs, Italiens, der Niederlande, Englands und Deutschlands, mit einer Übersetzung der altfranzösischen Versnovelle und einem Anhang: Die "Kastellan von Couci"-sage als "Gabrielle de Vergi"-légende*, Halle, 1909.

ical influence. There is indeed an episode in *Li Roumans dou Chastelain de Couci* which resembles the main motivating episode of the *Châtelaine de Vergi*, namely, in both poems the secret love affair is revealed by a jealous woman, who has been repulsed by the lover.²⁵ But this seems to be the only point of resemblance. In the English poem there is not even this episode. The manner of the lady of Faguell's death is identical with that of the *Châtelaine de Vergi*: they both die of grief. But the cause is very different: in the second story the knight has broken a convention of the Court of Love, but he is alive and still loves his lady; in the first he is dead. Considering the facts that the outlines of the two stories resemble each other at no other point and that death for love's sake is the common property of story-tellers, as witness the *lais* of Marie de France, it seems fairly certain that the *Knight of Curtesy* was not influenced by the *Châtelaine de Vergi*.

The next point to consider is whether the *Decameron* was the source of the *Knight of Curtesy*. English poetry has been greatly influenced by Boccaccio; many instances of borrowings from his works have been studied in detail. Yet probably the *Decameron* did not affect English literature until the fifteenth century. In the case of the poem under discussion, conditions were favorable for borrowing. Two versions of the Eaten Heart Legend occur in the *Decameron*,²⁶ the story of Guiscardo and Ghismonda, and the story of Messer Guiglielmo Rossiglione e Messer Guiglielmo Guardastagno. There was actually printed in 1532 (over thirty years before the time limit set for the printing of the romance) a translation of the first novel of the fourth day of the *Decameron*.²⁷ That the Middle English romance is comparatively late one assumes from the fact that it is printed in the sixteenth century; this assumption is corroborated by the linguistic tests which place the date of the poem's composition in the third quarter of the fifteenth century. Conditions were, therefore, favorable for borrowing: there were two versions of the eaten heart story in the *Decameron*; one of these versions had been translated into English before the time limit set for the printing of the *Knight of Curtesy*; the date of the poem's composition is later than that of the first influence of the *Decameron* in England. Yet in spite of these facts there does not seem to have been any direct influence on the Middle English poem from Boccaccio's novels or from the translation. The story of Guiscard and Sigismund belongs to a different group of the Eaten Heart Legend, that group which Patzig²⁸ classifies as "Der Geliebte wird vom Mann bezw. Vater getötet, und die Frau endet auf andere Weise als durch Sturz (Gram, Gift, Hunger, Kloster)," whereas the English romance is classified as belonging to the fourth group, "Der ferne Geliebte befiehlt nach seinem Tode der Frau sein Herz zu bringen; die Frau stirbt vor Gram." That is, in the Guiscardo story, the lover is killed by the father of his lady, and she drinks poison; in the *Knight of Curtesy*, the lover is killed fighting in the crusades,

²⁵ Matzke, *A. Marshall Elliott Studies*, i, 15-16.

²⁶ iv, 1 and 9.

²⁷ "Guystarde and Sygysmonde: Here foloweth the amorous hystory of Guystarde and Sygysmonde, and of theyr dolorous deth by her father, newly trāslated out of laten in to engyssh by Wyllŷm Walter seruant to syr Henry Marney Knyght chaunceler of ye duchy of Lancastre. . . . Thus endeth the amorous history of Guystarde and Sygysmonde. Imprynted at London in Fletestrete at the sygne of the Sonne by Wynkyn de Worde. In the yeaue of our lorde. MCCCCXXXII." Reprinted in the *Life of Saint Ursula. Guiscard and Sigismund*. London, 1818. Shakespeare Press. This poem comprises 644 lines, written in seven-line stanzas, riming ababbcc.

²⁸ See Appendix to Section III.

and his lady dies of sorrow. Moreover there are minor elements of plot which differ from those of the English poem: The king himself discovers the love affair; he then orders Guiscard imprisoned and killed and has his heart taken uncooked in a gold cup to Sigismund. These details obviously differ from those of the *Knight of Curtesy*, where the lover is observed by a spy, is killed in the Holy Land, and his heart served up to his lady, cooked in the "daintiest wise."²⁹ Nor does the ninth novel of the fourth day seem to have exerted more influence on the English romance. This story Patzig³⁰ classifies as "Der Frevler wird vom Mann erschlagen, und die Frau stürzt sich herab." In this tale the husband waits in ambush for the lover, who is his familiar friend, and kills him; when the lady learns of his death, she leaps from the castle window. From these facts it does not seem probable that the *Decameron* influenced the English poem.

We have left for consideration the first question, Does the *Knight of Curtesy* derive from *Li Roumans dou Chastelain de Couci*, from the *Chronique*, from both, or from a lost French source? Before beginning my analysis of this problem, I shall outline the plots of the stories referred to.

Li Roumans dou Chastelain de Couci is accessible in the edition of Crapelet, published in 1829. In addition to the romance, which comprises 8244 four-stress lines, written in riming couplets, Crapelet's edition contains a prose translation, "L'Histoire du Châtelain de Coucy et de la Dame de Fayel."³¹ Briefly the story of the romance is as follows:

Renaut, Châtelain de Couci, loves *la dame de Faiel*. At first she repulses his advances, but finally she is won by his knightly fame and deeds. When the lady grants Renaut her love, every effort is made to keep the affair secret and to make it appear that Yzabel, the lady's maid, is the châtelain's love. Another lady falls in love with Renaut. When he repulses her, she discovers and reveals his secret love affair to the lord of Faiel, who then spies on the lovers' meetings. Yzabel is sent away; and the châtelain can no longer visit the lady of Faiel on this pretext. Gobert, the châtelain's squire, pretending to act as the husband's spy, still comes to the castle. Renaut is brought to his lady disguised as a wounded knight. On a pilgrimage to Saint-Maur-des-Fossés, the lady while passing through a ford falls into the water and is taken to a mill to await dry clothing. There Renaut is expecting her. The husband, angered that his schemes to keep the lovers apart are of no avail, announces to his wife that he is going to the crusades and that she must accompany him. In the guise of a merchant, the châtelain comes to the castle of Faiel and is told of the husband's plans. He goes to England and joins Richard's army. Then the husband declares he has reconsidered his plans and will remain at home. As a blind beggar, Renaut comes to bid his lady adieu. She gives him a braid of hair as a love-token. After two years' fighting, Renaut is wounded by a poisoned arrow. When the wound fails to heal, he sets sail for France, to see his lady once more before his death. As he feels death approaching, he orders Gobert to cut his heart from his body when he is dead and carry it in a box together with a letter and the braid of hair to the lady of Faiel. He dies and is buried at Brindisi. As Gobert nears the castle of Faiel, he is met by the husband, who suspecting a love-message, forcibly gains possession of the box and drives the squire away. The lord returns to his home and has the heart prepared for the lady's dinner. Of her own

²⁹ Though the story of Guiscardo and Sigismunda did not influence the *Knight of Curtesy*, we have a direct descendant in the ballad, "Lady Diamond," a poem of 44 lines, variously called "Lady Dismal" and "Lady Daisy," both names which Professor Child believed to be corruptions of Ghismonda. (*English and Scottish Ballads*, Riv. Ed. vol. ii, bk. iv, 382-383.) See also Child's *English and Scottish Popular Ballads*, Boston and N. Y. 1894, V, part i, 29-38, no. 269 and part ii, 303.

³⁰ See Appendix to Section III.

³¹ *Li Roumans*, 275-427.

volition she praises the dish, is told that it is Renaut's heart, and for proof is shown the letter and the braid. She swoons and dies. To atone for his cruelty her husband has her buried with great honor; but he is forced to leave the country by his wife's family. He goes to the Holy Land; after a long absence he returns to France and soon dies.³²

The story as given in the *Chronique*³³ is simpler:

There lived in the time of King Philip and King Richard of England a most gentle and valiant knight at arms, who was named Regnault de Couci and who was the Châtelain de Couci. He loved the lady of Faïel. Yet for pure love of arms he went to the crusades, though he regretted greatly leaving his love. Fighting the Saracens, he was wounded by an arrow; and from that wound he soon died. At his death he grieved greatly; and, calling his esquire to him, he said, "I pray you, when I am dead, take my heart and bear it to my lady of Faïel; wrap it in this long braid of hair." Then he delivered him the lock of hair and a little jewel-case in which he kept the jewels and gems which his lady had given him, bidding him to carry them always for love and souvenir of her. When the chevalier was dead, the esquire took the jewel-case. Opening the body, he cut out the heart; then he prepared it with spices and, together with the braid, the casket, and a letter which Regnault had written with his own hand, placed it in a box. When he reached France, he traveled toward the land where the lady dwelt; near her home, he met the lord of Faïel, who knew him well. The lord seized and gripped the squire till he cried out for mercy. To him the lord said: "Either I will kill thee or thou tellest me where is the châtelain!" The squire told him all that had passed. And because the lord believed him not and would have killed him, the squire showed him the box. Then the lord of Faïel took the box and bade the squire begone from that land. The lord hastened to his cook and ordered him to prepare the heart in the best wise he knew. The cook prepared the viand; at dinner it was served to the lady. When she had eaten, her husband questioned her: "Lady, hast thou eaten a delicate morsel?" And she replied that she had eaten a delicate morsel. He said to her: "I have had prepared for thee a viand which thou loved much." The lady could not think what this was and did not answer. Her husband said to her: "Knowest thou what thou hast eaten? . . . Know that thou hast eaten the heart of the Châtelain de Couci!" Because she would not believe this, he gave her the box and the letter. When she saw the well known writing, her color began to change; and she said to her lord: "True it is that this viand I have loved much. And I believe that he whose heart it was must be dead, the most loyal chevalier in all the world. Thou hast made me eat his heart; it is the last food I shall ever eat. Nor shall I ever eat so noble food again. It is not right that after such delicate meat I should eat other food, and I swear to thee I shall never eat other food after this!" And she left the table and went to her chamber, grieving greatly. And in this same grief and dolour, she finished her life and died. Therefore was the lord of Faïel sad; but he could not remedy the matter, nor could any man or woman in the world. This story was known throughout the land and a great war was made by the lady's friends, which at the last the king ended. Thus end the loves of the Châtelain de Couci and the Lady of Faïel.

The *Knight of Curtesy* may be summarized as follows:

In Faguell dwell a lord and his lady; also the noble Knight of Curtesy. Hearing of the knight's prowess and renown, the lord of Faguell invites him to his court. The knight and the lady love each other. One day in the garden they discover each to the other their love, vowing to love always as brother and sister. A spy overhears their speech and discloses their secret to the lord of Faguell. The lord makes a great feast to which he bids all his knights. During the course of the meal, he says to the Knight of Curtesy that it is not fitting that a knight should stay at home by the fire, he should seek adventures. The knight replies that he will do so for his

³² Cf. M. L. N., xxvi, 7.

³³ Fauchet, *Recueil de l'origine de la langue et poésie Française*, 124-128. See Appendix.

lord's sake and for his lady. After dinner he makes ready his horse and his harness. The lady gives him a lock of hair to wear on his helm. The knight rides forth by dale and down towards Rhodes. In Lombardy he meets a dragon and finally kills it; being wounded in the encounter, he goes to a nunnery and there is healed by a surgeon. At Rhodes he fights against the Saracens. In one great battle he kills a Saracen chief and is then attacked by twelve Saracens in a rout; they wound him mortally. He calls his page and bids him bear to his lady his heart wrapped in the lock of hair. The page is met by the lord of Faguell, who takes the heart and the hair. The lord goes home and orders his cook to prepare the heart. When the lady has eaten the heart, her husband tells her she has eaten the heart of him to whom she gave her hair. She rises and goes to her chamber, confesses, receives the Host, and lays her down to die. She laments the knight's death and reproaches her husband, who she thinks has slain the knight. He begs her forgiveness and it is freely granted. She protests that she has not loved the knight sinfully and declares that she will never eat other meat. Thus she dies. And the poem ends on the following pious note:

Wyth that the lady, in all theyr sight,
Yelded up her spyrit, making her mone;
The hyghe God, moost of myght,
On her haue mercy and us echone!³⁴

When we analyze the elements of the plots outlined above, we find a confusion similar to that which exists among the European representatives of the Eaten Heart Legend. (1) In some cases the *Knight of Curtesy* borrows from the *Chronique*, (2) in others from *Li Roumans*, (3) in yet others from both romance and prose; (4) in some cases the English version differs from both *Li Roumans* and the *Chronique*; and (5) in other cases incidents are related which do not occur in the French.

(1) In the case of borrowings from the *Chronique* the evidence is clear. The resemblances are too close to be accidental.

a) The first instance refers to the character and occupation of the lover.

<i>Chronique</i>	<i>English</i>	<i>Li Roumans</i>
The lover is "ung aultre moult gentil gallart preux chevalier en armes."	The lover is <i>bolde, wyse, and hardy</i> , "the noble Knight of Curtesy." ³⁵	The Châtelain de Couci is called a valiant knight, ³⁶ yet the emphasis is on his identity with the trouvère, Gui de Couci; throughout the poem, he composes and sings songs to his lady. ³⁷

³⁴ 501-504.

³⁵ I. 16. Ritson (353-354) speaks of the title, "Knight of Curtesy," as a corruption of "Couci." In *Li Roumans* (I. 62) occurs the description, "Biaus fu, cortois, plains de savoir."

³⁶ II. 59-74.

³⁷ II. 364-408, 820-859, 2505-2626.

b) The description of the knight's death:

<i>Chronique</i>	<i>English</i>	<i>Li Roumans</i>
Fighting Saracens, Regnault is wounded "d'un quarel." He orders his esquire to cut out his heart after he is dead, and carry it wrapped in the braid of hair to his lady.	The knight is wounded mortally in an encounter with the Saracens. He orders his page to cut out his heart (after he is dead) and bear it, wrapped in the hair, to his lady. ³⁸	The châtelain, fighting in Richard's army against the Saracens, is wounded by "un grant quarel envenime." His wound fails to heal and he takes ship for France. As he feels death approaching, he commands Gobert, his squire, to take to the lady of Faïel his heart, which the squire is to cut from his body after his death, the braid of hair which she gave him as a keepsake when he departed for the crusades, and a letter which he dictates to a clerk. ³⁹

c) The lady's behavior when she learns what meat she has eaten:

<i>Chronique</i>	<i>English</i>	<i>Li Roumans</i>
When the lady learns that she has eaten the châtelain's heart, at once she leaves the table and goes to her chamber. There she dies.	"Up she rose wyth hert full wo And streight up into her chambre wente." ⁴⁰	The lady swoons, is carried to her bed, and dies. ⁴¹

(2) The instances cited above indicate that the English author used the *Chronique* for his source. Yet there is one episode in the English romance's plot that follows the French romance rather than the French prose. In both romances the lover is forced to leave the court by the suspicious husband.

<i>Chronique</i>	<i>English</i>	<i>Li Roumans</i>
Regnault joins the crusades "pour ce qu' il exerceitoit voulentiers les armes"	The lord of Faguell, made suspicious by a spy's story, tells the knight he should be out in the world, seeking knightly adventures. The implicit order, coupled with the slur on his courage, forces the knight to go. He does not set forth to join the crusades; but in the course of his wanderings he comes to Rhodes, where he engages in the crusades as a chivalrous adventure. ⁴²	The lord of Faïel plots to rid himself of the châtelain. Yzabel is sent away so that Renaut will have no pretext for visiting the castle. When, by divers tricks, the châtelain outwits the husband and continues to see the wife, the husband hits upon a scheme to separate the lovers. He announces that he is going to the crusades and that his wife must accompany him. When Renaut hears of this, he goes to England and there joins Richard's army. Then the lord of Faïel proclaims his decision not to go upon the crusades. Renaut is obliged to go. Thus the husband rids himself of an unwelcome neighbor.

³⁸ ll. 375-384. The poem does not expressly state how the knight is wounded, but the implication is that he receives his death-wound either from a sword or lance.

³⁹ 7508-7874.

⁴⁰ 449-450.

⁴¹ 8073-8138.

⁴² 145-152.

The French episode is more elaborate than the English; yet in each version the same motive is used to bring about the lover's departure from court, namely, a suspicious husband's jealousy. In the *Chronique* Regnault joins the Crusade because he likes to fight.

(3) The third phase of the analysis deals with those elements that are common to the romance and the prose:

a) The love-token which the lady gives the knight when he leaves the court:

<i>Chronique</i>	<i>English</i>	<i>Li Roumans</i>
"ung las de soye moult bel et bien fait, et y avoit de ses cheveux ouvrez parmi la soye dont l'œuvre sembloit moult belle et riche dont il lyoit ung bourrelet moult riche par dessus son heaulme et avoit loinz pendans par derriere a gros boutons de perles."	(She) "cut of her here bothe yelow e and bright." "Were this . . . Upon your helme, moche curteyse knight." (He), "one his helme it set on hye With rede thredes of ryche golde." ⁴⁵	"D'unes forces qu'ot aprestées A errant ses tresces copées, Et estroitement les ploia; En cendal les envelopa, Et puis li donne, et cilz les prent Qui li dist que songneusement Les gardera pour soie amour Tant qu'il sera mis au retour." ⁴⁴

b) The husband meets the messenger and takes away the heart by force:

<i>Chronique</i>	<i>English</i>	<i>Li Roumans</i>
The lord of Faiel meets the esquire in the wood near his castle and gets possession of the love-token by the use of threats of death.	The lord of Faguell out hunting, meets the page, and forcibly secures the heart, threatening death if it is not surrendered. ⁴⁵	Gobert hastens to the vicinity of Faiel; there he waits a favorable time to deliver his message and gift to the lady. As he goes through the outlying forest, the lord sees and recognizes him. He threatens Gobert with death by hanging if he does not tell him of any news or message he may have of Regnault. Gobert answers that the châtelain is dead and buried at Brindisi. To prove his master dead Gobert gives up the letter and the box containing the heart. ⁴⁶

c) The cooking of the heart:

<i>Chronique</i>	<i>English</i>	<i>Li Roumans</i>
"Et le seigneur vint a son queux et luy dist qu' il mist ce cueur en si bonne manyere et l'apparellast en telle confiture que on en peut bien menger."	"Coke . . . Dresse me this herte . . . in the deintiest wise that may be. Make it swete and delycate to eate For it is for my lady bryght" ⁴⁷	"Son mestre queus mist à raison Et li commande estroitement . . . De cest cueur un autre feras Dont tu ta dame serviras Tant seulement, et non autrui Li mengiers fu très delitables." ⁴⁸

⁴⁵ 178-180, 205-208.

⁴⁴ 7344-7351.

⁴⁶ 389-416.

⁴⁵ 7875-7996.

⁴⁷ 417-424.

⁴⁸ 8000-8017.

(4) The fourth division of this analysis treats of the episodes which are used in all three accounts, but which in the English differ in detail from the French.

a) In *Li Roumans* the love of the châtelain and the lady is admittedly physical; the devices by which the meetings are arranged are proof of this. Moreover the poem is in accord with the Court of Love convention. In the *Chronique* we have no reference to this point; there is not even mention of kisses when the lovers part, whereas the romance emphasizes this feature of the farewell and of their whole relation. It can be argued that the prose version also is in accord with the convention of courtly love; yet it seems that there is no evidence to support this point. Indeed it is customary for the typical medieval romantic tale to describe the meetings of its hero and its heroine minutely and to make it plain to the hearer that that physical consummation of love which the sympathetic audience wishes for the lovers has actually been effected. Therefore it is probable that the *Chronique's* omission of such details indicates quite certainly that in this particular version the love-affair was platonic. There is no doubt about this point in the *Knight of Curtesy*; the repetition of the word "chastity"⁴⁹ seems a trick of the author to win sympathy for the unjustly accused lovers.

b) The second episode in this class is the circumstance by means of which the husband learns of the love-affair. In the *Chronique* there is no need for this episode, because the knight has gone to the wars for the pure love of fighting. In *Li Roumans* the husband suspects an *amour* and schemes to be rid of the châtelain. In the English poem the knight and the lady are overheard talking in the garden by a person whom the author calls a spy, but who from the context seems to be no more than a maliciously minded but accidental eavesdropper.⁵⁰

c) The manner of the knight's death.

<i>Chronique</i>	<i>English</i>	<i>Li Roumans</i>
"Ce chastelains fut feru d'un quarel ou costé bien avant, du quel coup il luy convint mourir."	They laid on him on every side "Wyth cruell strokes and mortall; They gaue him woundes so depe and wide That to the grounde downe did he fall." ⁵¹	Renaut dies from the effects of a wound dealt by "un grant quarel envenimé." ⁵²

d) The lady's behavior after she has eaten the heart:

<i>Chronique</i>	<i>English</i>	<i>Li Roumans</i>
"Quant elle ot mengé le seigneur luy demanda: 'Dame, avez vous mengé bonne viande?' . . . Et celle luy respondy qu'elle avoit mengé bonne."	"Whan the lady had eaten wele Anone to her the lorde sayd there, 'His herte haue ye eaten, euery dele, To whome you gaue your yelowre here.'" ⁵³	"Du cuer seul la dame servirent, Et de l'autre partout offrirent; Chascuns volentiers en menja, La dame moult ces més loua, Et li samble bien c'onques mais Ne menga plus savoureux més." ⁵⁴

⁴⁹ 87-104.

⁵⁰ 105-124.

⁵¹ 369-372.

⁵² 7511.

⁵³ 437-440.

⁵⁴ 8023-8028.

The *Chronique* and *Li Roumans* have a detail which has been omitted in the English version, which ends at the lady's death. In the *Chronique* the lady's friends war against her husband and are pacified only by the king. In *Li Roumans*⁵⁵ her parents want vengeance, but finally are reconciled. In both versions the husband goes to the Holy Land; when he returns to France, he soon dies.

(5) Last of all, we have to consider the episodes which have been added to the English romance. Of course, it is possible that these additions come indirectly from Boccaccio or a lost Provençal source. On investigation, this seems not to have been the case. There are no striking resemblances to prove that the English poet was influenced directly by the Italian or by the Provençal.

a) In the *Chronique* and *Li Roumans* the châtelain lives near the castle of Faiel and calls as a matter of courtesy. In the *Knight of Curtesy* the lord of Faguell, hearing of the knight's fame, entreats him to come to his court, offering him rewards and gifts.⁵⁶ However this, strictly considered, might be deemed an elaboration of the French versions. The two episodes which I list next are clearly additions.

b) The first is the knight's fight with the dragon.⁵⁷ This does not appear in the French stories at all, so far as I have been able to discover. It may, therefore, be considered an insertion from current folklore.

c) The second episode that has been added is contained in two lines:

She confessed her devoutly tho
And shortly receyued the sacrament.⁵⁸

I have already referred to the parallel passages in the French, describing the lady's death. There is no reference there to such a devout culmination of her life.

d) Besides these additions to the plot, there is a slight difference in the manner in which the lady's laments over her separation from the knight are uttered. In the *Chronique* there is no record of any complaints. In *Li Roumans* the lovers complain and lament as the time of the knight's departure draws near.⁵⁹ In the *Knight of Curtesy* the laments occur as abrupt digressions. The knight has reached Rhodes and is welcomed by the besieged Christians in the city.

So for this time I leue them there,
And tourne to his lady bryght
Which is at home wyth wofull mone.
Sore morned she both day and night,
Sayenge, 'Alas! my loue is gone!'⁶⁰

And so for some seven stanzas more the lady laments her knight's enforced absence. The value of these additions I shall discuss when I study the poem as literature. At present it is enough to know that the poem does contain material which it could not have got either from the *Chronique* or *Li Roumans*.

When the sources of the Middle English poem are summed up, the following confusions appear: (1) The poem uses material from both the *Chronique* and *Li Roumans*; (2) it uses episodes which appear in one or the other of the French versions but with a different treatment; and (3) it introduces at least two original episodes.

⁵⁵ 8139-8165.

⁵⁶ 17-28.

⁵⁷ 232-272.

⁵⁸ 451-452.

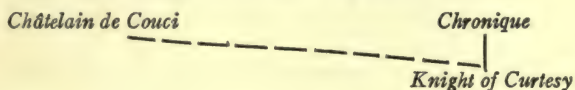
⁵⁹ 7276 ff.

⁶⁰ 288-292.

To begin with the third point first, neither the dragon nor the act of communicating are unusual details. Dragons abound in medieval romance and are common in folklore. To receive the Host *in hora mortis* was, in the Middle Ages, the Church's ordained preparation for a Christian death: witness the earlier account of Cædmon's death. These episodes were, I believe, in the air; they were common property ready to the hand of any one who could use them appropriately.

In regard to the second difficulty, it is really no difficulty at all. For it is the ordinary practice of adapters of old stories from foreign tongues to remold such stories out of all semblance to their former selves; so did Chaucer and so Shakespeare. The variance between the English and French indicates that the English poet thought he could better the story by changing it.

There is left for consideration, then, the first proposition, namely, that the English romance borrows material from both the *Chronique* and *Li Roumans*. We have already studied in detail these borrowings and seen that the *Knight of Curtesy* follows *Li Roumans* in one instance, i. e., the reason for the knight's departure for the Crusades, whereas it follows the *Chronique* in three, i. e., the lover is a knight of renown and prowess, not a poet; he dies in the Holy Land; and the lady retires to her chamber to die. Add to this the fact that both the English poem and the French prose chronicle are short and compact, while the French romance is long and drawn out to the extent of some 8,000 lines. The conclusion is: That, while the English author knew of and had read the *roman d'aventure*, yet he must have written his poem, using the account of the *Chronique* as an outline, borrowing details from *Li Roumans*, reworking material as it seemed expedient to him to do so, and introducing episodes of common knowledge and interest. To plot this relationship it must be shown as a continuation of Matzke's chart.



4

CONCLUSION: The *Knight of Curtesy*, so studied, is seen to be a step in the development of the Eaten Heart Legend. From the primitive source in folklore the story develops; it occurs in a lost Provençal version which is the direct source of Boccaccio's novels and of the Biography of Guilhelm de Cabestaing. From the Biography is derived an intermediary version, Y, which in its turn produces the *Chronique* and *Li Roumans dou Chastelain de Couci*. Directly from the *Chronique* the Middle English poem, *The Knight of Curtesy and the Fair Lady of Faguell*, is developed, with traces of influence from the French romance.

APPENDIX TO SECTION III

The following list of representatives of the Eaten Heart Legend is found in Patzig, *Zur Geschichte der Herzmäre*, 6-8. It seems inexpedient to include this material in the body of Section III, as the citation from Ahlström is a summary of the longer list. Patzig's list, however, is appended here for the convenience of those who are interested in further study of the Eaten Heart Legend.

- I. Der Frevler wird vom Mann erschlagen und die Frau stürzt sich herab.
 1. Die Lebensbeschreibung des Troubadours Guilem de Cabestanh.
 2. G. Boccaccio, *Il Decamerone* Giornata iv. novella ix.
- II. Der Geliebte wird vom Mann bezw. Vater getötet, und die Frau endet auf andere Weise als durch Sturz (Gram, Gift, Hunger, Kloster).
 1. Der Lai Guirun.
 2. Die Erzählung von Linaure bei Arnaut de Marsan.
 3. Der nordfranzösische Lai d'Ignaure (von Renaut).
 4. *Le Cento novelle antiche* (c. 1193-1350).
 5. Drei mitteldeutsche Strophen im Tone Reinmanns von Brennenburg mit der Überschrift: Als er sterben wolt, macht er diss dry. Drei desgl. mit der Überschrift: Van der frauwen gemacht.
 6. G. Boccaccio, *Il Decamerone* Giornata iv. novella i.
 7. Ein hübsch Lied von des Brembergers End und Tod. In des Brembergers thon.
 8. Deutsches Volkslied vom Bremberger.
 9. Niederländisches Volkslied.
 10. Schwedisches Volkslied von Hertig Fröjdenborg och Fröken Adelin, oft gedruckt unter dem Namen Kärleksvisa.
 11. Mme. d'Aulnoy, *Mémoires de la Cour d'Espagne*.
- III. Der ferne Geliebte befiehlt nach seinem Tode der Frau sein Herz zu bringen, und sie tötet sich selbst.

Sermones (Iohannis?) parati de tempore et de sanctis, sermo cxxiv.
- IV. Desgl., die Frau stirbt vor Gram.
 1. *Chronique du chastelain de Couci et de la dame de Faïel*.
 2. Von der minne oder der hertz spruch von Konrad von Würzburg.
 3. *Li roumans dou chastelain de Coucy et de la dame de Fayel* von Jacemes Sagesep.
 4. Niederländische Übersetzung des Romans von Sakesep.
 5. Niederländischer Roman. 2 Fragmente van den borchgrave van Couchi.
 6. Englische Romanze *The Knight of Courtesy*.
 7. Howell Letters (1634).
 8. English chap-book (1707): *The constant but unhappy lovers*.
- V. Trotzdem der Frevler nicht getötet und sein Herz nicht gegessen wird, gehört doch hierher: Ein hübsch Lied von dem Bremberger und einer Hertzogin von Österreich.

IV

LITERARY CRITICISM¹

When we study the *Knight of Curtesy*, not as in the previous section as a step in the development of the Eaten Heart Legend, but as the product of a definite literary technique, we are impressed by the following dominant traits: (1) The poet has carried simplification to its artistic extreme; in relating episodes in the plot and in delineating character, he has omitted unnecessary detail, thus shortening and condensing the poem. (2) When, on the other hand, he has added episodes which do not occur in the French analogues of the story, as in the case of the fight with the dragon, he has used such episodes to increase the gentle pathos of the story and to heighten the artistic effect. (3) By making the love-affair Platonic, he purifies the lovers' relation and ennobles the characters of the knight and the lady so that they may more easily win sympathy.

1

The Middle English author consistently practices that selection of material which critics agree to be the most important element of literary craftsmanship. For the bulky *Li Roumans* of some 8,000 lines,² he has substituted a poem numbering 504 lines, compact and unified, without useless details or false sentiment. With taste, he omits the intrigues, lies, and petty tricks, by which, in the *roman d'aventure*, the Châtelain de Couci and the lady of Faiel come together. He omits the *chansons*, which are suitable to the historic figure of the trouvère, Gui de Couci, but which would only serve to superimpose upon the character of the Knight of Curtesy the conventions and the color of another age and society. He omits the exposition of the châtelain's knightly exploits and substitutes for it the bare statement that the knight is valorous and that all men tell of his deeds,³ backing up this praise with proof in the fact that the lord of Faguell invites him to come to his castle, offering him "Townes, towres, and many a castell."⁴ For the purposes of his

¹ Throughout this discussion we must bear in mind the fact that the Middle English author may have been translating directly from a lost French original. If this should be the case, what we say of his technique in these pages is invalid. However, since we have no knowledge of such a supposititious poem, we must premise that in the points below discussed the English author is following a method characteristic of the medieval writer, namely, using old material and reworking it to suit his own purposes, often bettering it in the process.

² This argument may seem inconsistent with the conclusion reached in the previous section, namely, that the *Knight of Curtesy* follows the outline of the *Chronique* more closely than that of *Li Roumans*. Yet I also showed in that section that the Middle English poem uses material from both analogues. I take it as proof of the poet's taste that, having both sources available, he chose the conciser of the two. It seems to me that such a choice constitutes a criticism, though indirect, of the very points in *Li Roumans* on which I have based my study of the workmanship displayed in the *Knight of Curtesy*.

³ 11-16.

⁴ 17-28.

poem he has changed his *dramatis personae*: he omits the lady's serving-maid, Yzabel, who was, indeed necessary to the success of the *amour* in *Li Roumans*, but who would be useless baggage in the English poem; and the esquire, Gobert, is flattened to the figure of a nameless page,⁵ whose juvenile proportions enhance those of the knight.

2

In the two cases in which the author introduces new material, he does so deliberately and sparingly of words. When at her death the lady is confessed and receives the Host, the whole ceremony is compressed into two lines.⁶ The dragon episode,⁷ to be sure, is longer; it covers forty lines of the five hundred and four. At first thought this seems an example of grave disproportion. Yet I believe the poem needs this digression.

In the first place, it lends local color to the scene and conjures up the appropriate *mise en scène* for knightly adventures. The episode is not fanciful embroidery; for dragons are the stuff of which the tapestry of these old tales is woven. It is a bit of detail by which the author gains the effect of reality.

In the second place, the episode serves as an interlude in the progress of the love-affair. A man, who uses words as charily as did the author of this romance, would not devote, without reason, a twelfth of his poem to an episode as apparently unrelated to the main sequence of events as the dragon episode seems to be. And his reason may have been some such an one as this: Having set the scene, arrayed the characters, got the action moving with a rapidity foreign to contemporary medieval romances, the author wishes to give his hearers (who could not, as we, lay down the book at will) a breathing space before the poem hastens to its unhappy end. It is, if you please, such a point of rest as Coventry Patmore describes in *Principle in Art*. Fighting dragons was the ordinary business of medieval gentlemen; the mention of dragons put the audience at once on familiar ground. Thus the fight with the dragon serves as a breathing-space and as an outlet for emotion. The knight has been loving exaltedly. And the audience, which has sympathized with the love-affair, is glad to relieve its sensibilities by striking, vicariously, several blows at the *fyers fynde*.

The dragon episode plays another part in the scheme of the poem. The poem begins by winning sympathy for the lady of Faguell with an ingenuous account of her charms. When the knight is introduced, he also wins the hearer's sympathy. But, when he starts on his adventures, about the usual businesses of male mankind, while the lady sits at home,⁸ the interest shifts to its original position and sympathy is once more centered on the lady. When the knight dies, one "is wo therfore"; but he does die a knight, fighting and in action.⁹ The lady is doomed to a horrible deed, to feast on the heart of him she loves.¹⁰

I have analyzed these points because it seems proof of the author's sense of proportion and of emphasis that when he does introduce new material, he can make it serve a three-fold purpose, namely, add realistic detail, serve as an interlude, and effect that shift in sympathy which I have outlined above.

* 375-412.

* 451-452.

* 233-272.

* 289-324.

* 345-390.

¹⁰ 429-440.

Thus both by exclusion and by inclusion the author shows his skill. But not only does he improve on his original, simplifying, condensing, and unifying; he shifts the spiritual emphasis of the poem, converting a relation which was too common in the days of the Court of Love into the material of a simple love story. By omitting the physical detail which predominates in *Li Roumans*, the author not only shortens the poem substantially,¹¹ but he creates a situation which can not help winning sympathy. Of the lovers in the *roman d'aventure* the medieval auditor would say, albeit indulgently, "Well, they had their fling. And now they're paying for it." But for the innocent lovers one feels only pity and tenderness. They are, after all, overcome by circumstances. The knight did not seek out the lady of Faguell after hearing of the fame of her beauty, as a typical medieval knight would have done; instead, her husband begged him to come to his court.¹² When the two love, they conceal the fact; and it is chance discovers their passion each to the other.¹³ When the secret is revealed, each vows to love the other in chastity.¹⁴

This situation is handled honestly. For, whereas human indulgence condones the sin of those moved by a great passion, yet for our heroes and our heroines we rather choose the stainless knights, the Galahads, *les dames sans peur et sans reproche*. For his sin Percival could not reach the Grail. We can not imagine *la dame de Faïel* receiving the Host as she lies dying; but to the innocent lips of the lady of Faguell it comes most fittingly. Simply as brother and sister they kiss and part.

Awaye was all theyr wofull mone,
The one had lyghted the others herte.¹⁵

And the husband's groundless suspicions break harshly on the scene.¹⁶

The delineation of the knight and of the lady is simple and direct. The knight we take to be brave and valorous, honorable and constant.¹⁷ He is not, as in the novel of Sigismunda and Guiscardo, a retainer of the lord of the castle; he is, in fact, a guest, honored and eminent. He respects the honor of his host and keeps faith with one who has claims on his allegiance through the gifts he has bestowed upon him. When the knight is forced to go seeking adventures,¹⁸ he does so without complaint,¹⁹ simply and courageously. He meets his death fighting; and his last thought is of his lady, to whom he sends his heart and her lovelock as token that he has been faithful unto death.²⁰ Thus he dies, as he lived, a brave knight and a constant lover.

It is, however, the lady whom I take to be the main character of the piece. It is she with whom the poem begins and with whom the poem ends. It is she whom the poem makes most lifelike and convincing. Upon her focus those characteristics which make the poem unlike its French prototypes.

¹¹ In *Li Roumans* the great mass of the poem is devoted to the intrigues by which the Châtelain de Couci contrives to visit the lady of Faïel. Thus he does not leave for the crusades till 1.7425. Compare the proportions, when in the Middle English romance he has left by 1.200.

¹² 17-28.

¹³ 56-86.

¹⁴ 87-102.

¹⁵ 111-112.

¹⁶ 125-128.

¹⁷ 11-16.

¹⁸ 145-156.

¹⁹ 182.

²⁰ 381-382.

In the first place, the Middle English poem uses the first ten lines to describe and place the lady, while it performs a similar service for the knight in six lines. From this point to the time when the knight leaves to seek adventures, space is allotted equally to the two. Then comes the dragon episode in forty lines; to balance it we have the lady's laments.²¹ These laments, coming as they do, in the midst of an account of the knight's warlike deeds, contrast the lovers' lots: he can find diversion and relief in the pursuit of his proper profession; for her there is nothing to do except sit at home and lament. This passage heightens the contrast which I have already mentioned in the discussion of the dragon episode and swings the balance in favor of the lady. The scene at dinner when the husband breaks out brutally:

"His herte haue ye eaten, euery dele,
To whome you gaue your yelowre here."²²

is admirably done; without a word the lady rises,²³ goes to her chamber,²⁴ confesses,²⁵ receives the sacrament,²⁶ forgives her husband after telling him that she is innocent of wrong doing,²⁷ and dies.²⁸ With her death the poem ends. "There is namore to seye."

When one considers the simplicity and purity of design in this little romance, the absence of the usual machinery of the *genre* (such as the inventory type of description), the limpid, direct, and unembroidered style, and the note of genuine emotion that runs through the poem, it does not seem excessive praise to call it a cameo, not indeed a piece of heroic proportions, but wrought in such childlike good faith that with the poet one enters the land of Faguell where ladies are fair and knights courteous.

²¹ 293-320.

²² 439-440.

²³ 449.

²⁴ 450.

²⁵ 451.

²⁶ 452.

²⁷ 473.

²⁸ 498.

V

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The Knight of Curtesy and the Fair Lady of Faguell

The text of this romance has been edited from a rotographic copy of the black-letter quarto pamphlet which is now preserved in the Bodleian Library, C. 39. Art. Sheld., "Imprynted at London by me Wyllyam Copland." This rotographic copy is now deposited in the Smith College Library. In the main Copland's text has been followed closely; and the variant spellings and readings of later editors have been indicated in footnotes. The following abbreviations have been used to indicate the spellings adopted by the several editors: C.=Copland, R.=Ritson, H.=Hazlitt, Ch.=Child, R(G).=Ritson, revised by Goldsmid. Three points need to be mentioned in regard to the orthography of the various editions of the poem: Ritson and Child print the Middle English *u* as *v* and *I* as *i*; Ritson, Hazlitt, and Child place an accent on the last syllable of such words as *countrie* and *chastite*, although no such mark occurs in the quarto; Ritson adopts the sign *f* for *s* in accordance with Copland's practice. In collating the text I have kept the old spelling in every case except *f*. In the quarto the stanza division is marked by the insertion of a small decorative figure at the left of every fourth line; this division is metrically correct and has been preserved by all the above mentioned editors. Emendations and expansions of Copland's abbreviations have been shown in italic. Words needed to complete the sense of a line have been placed in parentheses. As far as punctuation and capitalization are concerned, I have tried to bring them into accord with the current usage.

Here begynneth
a litell treatise of the Knight of Curtesy
and the lady of Faguell.

In Faguell, a fayre countre,
A great lorde somtyme dyd dwell,
Which had a lady so fayre and fre
That all men good of her dyd tel.

Fayre and pleasaunt she was in sight,
Gentyl and amyable in eche degre,
Chaste to her lorde, bothe day and nyght,
As is the turtyll upon the tre.

All men her loued, bothe yonge and olde,
For her vertue and gentynesse.
Also in that lande was a knight bolde,
Ryght wyse and ful of doughtinesse.

10

All men spake of his hardynesse,
 Ryche and poore of eche degre,
 So that they called him, doutlesse,
 The noble Knyght of Curtesy.

This knight so curteys¹ was and bolde
 That the lorde herde ther-of anone:
 He sayd that speke with him he wolde;
 For hym the messengere is gone

20

Wyth a letter unto this knight
 And sayd, "Syr, I pray God you se;
 My lorde of Faguell you sendeth ryght
 An hundred-folde gretynge by me.

"He praieth you in all hastyng
 To come in his court for to dwell;
 And ye shal lake no maner of thyng,
 As townes, towres, and many a castell."

The curteyse knight was sone content;
 And in all dilygence that might be
 Wyth the messengere anone he went
 This lorde to serue with humylite.

30

Fast they rode, bothe day and nyght,
 Tyll he unto the lorde was come;
 And whan the lorde of hym had a sight,
 Right frendly he did him welcome.

He gaue hym townenes, castelles, *and* towres,
 Whereof all other had enuye;
 They thought to reue him his honoures
 By some treason or trechery.

40

This lady, of whome I spake before,
 Seyng this knight so good and kynde,
 Afore all men that euer were bore
 She set on hym her herte and minde.

¹ R., H., Ch., R(G)., *so.* C., curtesy.

His paramour she thought to be,
 Hym for to loue wyth herte and minde,
 Nat in vyce but in chastyte,
 As chyldren that together are kynde.

This knight also, curteyse and wyse,
 With herte and mynde bothe ferme and fast, 50
 Louyd this lady wythouten vyse,
 Whyche tyll they dyed dyd euer laste.

Both night and day these louers true
 Suffred great paine, wo, and greuauce,
 How eche to other theyr minde might shewe;
 Tyll at the last by a sodaine chaunce

This knight was in a garden grene
 And thus began him to complayne:
 "Alas!" he sayd with murnynge eyen,
 "Now is my herte in wo and paine. 60

"From mournynge can I nat refrayne,
 This ladyes loue dothe me so wounde,
 I feare she hath of me disdayne."
 With that he fell downe to the grounde.

The lady in a windowe laye,
 With herte colde² as any stone;
 She wyst nat what to do nor saye
 Whan she herde the knightes mone.

Sore sighed that lady of renowne,
 In her face was no colour founde; 70
 Than into the gardein came she downe
 And sawe this knight lye on the grounde.

When she sawe hym lye so for her sake,
 Her hert for wo was almoost gone;
 To her comferte coude she none take,
 But in swoune³ fell downe hym upon,

² C., R., H., Ch., *so*. R(G), cold.

³ R., H., Ch., R(G), *so*. C., swonue.

So sadly that the knyght awoke;
 And whan that he sawe her so nere,
 To hym comforte anone he toke
 And began the lady for to chere.

80

He sayd, "Lady and loue, alas!
 Into this cure who hath you brought?"
 She sayd, "My loue and my solas,
 Your beaute standeth so in my thought

"That, yf I had no worldly make,
 Neuer none should haue my herte but ye."
 The knyght⁴ sayd, "Lady, for your sake,
 I shal you loue in chastyte."

"Our loue," he sayde, "shal be none other
 But chaste and true as is betwene
 A goodly syster and a brother,
 Fro⁵ luste our bodyes to kepe clene.

90

"And where-so-euer mi body be,
 Bothe day and night, at euery tyde,
 My simpele herte in chastite
 Shall euer-more, lady, with you abide."

This lady, white as any floure,
 Replete with feminine shamefastnesse,
 Begayne to chaunge her fare coloure
 And to him⁶ sayd, "My loue, doubtelesse,

100

"Under suche forme I shal⁷ you loue
 With faythful herte in chastite,
 Next unto God that is aboue,
 Bothe in welthe and aduersyte."

Eche of them kyssed other truely;
 But euer, alas! ther was a fo

⁴ R., H., Ch., R(G)., *so.* C., knyght.

⁵ R., H., Ch., R(G)., *so.* C., For.

⁶ C., *so.* R., H., Ch., R(G)., hym.

⁷ C., H., *so.* R., Ch., R(G)., shall.

Behynde the wall, them to espye,
Which after torned them to muche wo.

Out of the garden whan they were gone,
Eche from other dyd departe; 110
Awaye was all theyr wofull mone,
The one had lyghted the others herte.

Than this spye, of whome I tolde,
Whyche stode behinde the garden wall,
Wente unto his lorde ful bolde
And sayd, "Syr, shewe you I shall:

"By your gardyn as I was walkynge,
I herde the Knight of Curtesye,
Which with your lady was talkinge
Of loue unlauffull⁸ pryuely; 120

"Therefore yf ye suffre⁹ him for to procede,
Wyth your lady to haue his [joye],¹⁰
He shal bee lede fro you in dede,
Or elles they bothe shal you distroye."

Whan than the lorde had understande
The wordes that the spye him tolde,
He sware he wolde¹¹ rydde him fro that [lande]¹²
[Were]¹³ he neuer so stronge and bolde.

He sware on othe, by God Almyght,¹⁴
That he should neuer be glade certayne 130
While that knight was in his sight,
Tyl that he by some meane were slaine.

⁸ C., *so.* R., H., Ch., R(G)., unlawfull.

⁹ R., H., Ch., R(G)., *so.* C., suffice.

¹⁰ R., H., Ch., R(G)., *so.* C., loue.

¹¹ C., *so.* R., H., Ch., R(G)., would.

¹² R., H., Ch., R(G)., *so.* C. *omits.*

¹³ R., H., Ch., R(G)., *so.* C., where.

¹⁴ C., R., H., Ch., *so.* R(G)., almyght.

Than let he do crye a feest
 For euery man that thider wolde come,
 For euery man, bothe moost and leest;
 Thyder came lordes, bothe olde and yonge.

The lorde was at the table set
 And his lady by him that tide;
 The Knight of Curtesy anone was fet¹⁵
 And set downe on the other syde.

140

Theyr hartes should haue be wo-begone,
 If they had knowen the lordes thought;
 But whan that they were styll echone,
 The lorde these words anone forth brought:

"Me¹⁶ thinke it is syttinge¹⁷ for a knight
 For auentures to enquire,
 And nat thus, bothe day and night,
 At home to sojourne by the fyre.

"Therefore, Syr Knight of Curtesye,
 This thinge wyl I you counseyll,
 To ryde and go throughe the countre,
 To seke aduentures for your auayle:

150

"As unto Rodes, for to fight,
 The Christen fayth for to mayntayne,
 To shewe by armes your force and myght,
 In Lumbardy, Portyngale, *and* in Spayne."

Than spake the knyght to the lorde anone:
 "For your sake wyl I auenture my lyfe,
 Whether euer I come agayne or none,
 And for my¹⁸ ladyes sake, your wyfe;

160

¹⁵ C., H., Ch., *so.* R., R(G)., *set.*

¹⁶ R., Ch., R(G)., *so.* C., H., *My.*

¹⁷ C., *so.* R., H., Ch., R(G)., *fyttinge.*

¹⁸ R., Ch., R(G)., *so.* C., H., *me.*

"If I dyd nat, I were to blame."

Than sighed the lady with that worde;
In dolour depe her hirte¹⁹ was tane
And sore wounded as wyth a sworde.

Than after dyner the knight did go
His horse and harneyse to make redy;
The woful lady came him unto
And to him sayd right pyteously:

"Alas! yf ye go, I must complayne
Alone as a wofull creature;
If that ye be in batayle slayne,
On lyue may I not endure." 170

"Alas! unhappy creature,
Where shal I go, where shal I byde?
Of dethe, sothely, nowe am I sure;
And all worldly ioye I shal set a-syde."

A payre of sheres than dyd she take
And cut of her here bothe yelow and bright.
"Were this," than sayd she, "for my sake,
Upon your helme, moche cu[r]teyse knight."²⁰ 180

"I shall, dere lady, for your sake,"
This knyght sayd with styl morninge;
No comferte to him coude he take
Nor absteine him fro perfounde syghinge.

For grete pyte²¹ I can not wryte
The sorowe that was betwene them two;
Also I haue to smal respyte
For to declare theyr payne and wo.

The wofull departinge and complaynt
That was betwene these louers twayne, 190

¹⁹ C., H., so. R., Ch., R(G)., herte.

²⁰ R., Ch., R(G)., so. C., cutuyse knighe. H., cu[r]tayse knight.

²¹ C., R., Ch., R(G)., so. H., pytie.

Was neuer man that coude depaynt,²²
 So wofull[y]²³ did they complayne.

The teres ran from theyr eyen twayne
 For doloure whan they did departe;
 The lady in her castell did remayne,
 Wyth langour replenysshed was her herte.

Now leue we here this lady bryght
 Wythin²⁴ her castel makege her mone,
 And tourne we to the curteys knyght
 Whyche on his Iourney²⁵ forth is gone.

200

Unto hym-selfe²⁶ this knight sayd he,
 "Agaynst the Chrysten I wyl not fyght;
 But to the Rodes wyl I go
 Them to susteyne with all my myght."

Than did he her heere unfolde
 And one his helme it set on hye
 Wyth rede thredes of ryche golde
 Whiche he had of his lady.

Full richely his shelde was wrought
 Wyth asure stones and beten golde;
 But on his lady was his *thought*²⁷
 The yelowhe heare whan he dyd beholde.

210

Than forth he rode by dale and downe,
 After auentures to enquire,
 By many a castel, cyte, and towne;
 All to batayl was his desyre.

²² R., H., Ch., R(G)., *so.* C., detaynt.

²³ R., H., Ch., R(G)., *so.* C., wofull.

²⁴ C., *so.* R., H., Ch., R(G)., Within.

²⁵ C., *so.* R., H., Ch., R(G)., journey.

²⁶ C., *so.* R., H., Ch., R(G)., hym-self.

²⁷ R., H., Ch., R(G)., *so.* C., tohught.

In euery Iustyng²⁸ where he came
 None so good as he was founde;
 In euery place the pryce he wan
 And smote his aduersaryes to the grounde. 220

So whan he came to Lumberdye,
 Ther was a dragon ther-about
 Whyche did great hurt and vylanye;
 Bothe man and beste of hym had doubte.

As this knight rode there alone,
 Saue onely his page by his syde,
 For his lady he began to mone,
 Sore syghynge as he did ride.

"Alas!"²⁹ he sayd, "my lady swete,
 God wote in what case ye be; 230
 God wote whan we two shal mete;
 I feare that I shal neuer you se."

Than as he loked hym a-boute
 Towarde a hyll that was so hye,
 Of this dragon he harde a shoute;
 "Yonder is a feast," he sayd, "truly."

The knight him blessyd *and* forthe dyd go
 And sayd, "I shal³⁰ do my trauayle;
 Betyde me well, betyde me wo,
 The fyers fynde I shal³¹ assayle." 240

Than wyth the dragon dyd he meate;
 Whan she him sawe, she gaped wyde;
 He toke good hede, as ye may wete,
 And quykely sterted a lytle a-syde.

²⁸ C., *so.* R., H., Ch., R(G)., justyng.

²⁹ C., R., Ch., R(G)., *so.* H., Ala[s].

³⁰ C., *so.* R., H., Ch., R(G)., shall.

³¹ C., *so.* R., H., Ch., R(G)., shall.

He drewe his swerde like a knyght,
 This dragon fyersly to assayle;
 He gaue her strokes ful of myght;
 Stronge and mortall was the batayle.

The dragon gaue this knight a wounde
 Wyth his tayle upon the heed
 That he fell downe unto the grounde
 In a *swone*³² as he had ben deed.

250

So at the last he rose agayne
 And made his mone to God Almyght,
 And to Our Lady he dyd compleyne,
 Theyr helpe desyrynge in that fyght.

Than sterter³³ he wyth a fayrse courage
 Unto the dragon without fayle;
 He loked so for his aduauntage
 That [quyckely]³⁴ he smote of her tayle.

260

Than began the dragon for to yell
 And tourned her upon her syde;
 The knight was ware of her right well
 And in her bodi³⁵ made his sworde to slyde,

So that she coud nat remeue scarcely.³⁶
 The knight, that seinge, approched nere
 And smote her heed of lyghtly;
 Than was he escaped that daungere.

Than thanked he God of His grace,
 Whiche by His goodnes and mercye
 Hym had preserued in that place
 Through vertue of Hys Deyte.

270

³² C., R., H., Ch., R(G)., *sowne*.

³³ C., R., Ch., *so*. H., R(G)., *starte*.

³⁴ R., H., Ch., R(G)., *insert* *quyckely*.

³⁵ R., H., Ch., R(G)., *so*. C., *bodt*.

³⁶ R., Ch., R(G)., *so*. C., *scartely*. H., *seartenly*.

Than went he to a nonrye there besyde,
 And there a surgeand³⁷ by his arte
 Heled his woundes that were so wyde;
 And than fro thens he dyd departe,

To-warde the Rodes, for to fyght
 In bataill, as he had undertake,
 The fayth to susteyne with all his might;
 For his promysse he wil not breke.

280

Than of Sarazyns there was a route,
 All redy armen and in araye,
 That syged the Rodes round aboute,
 Fyersly agaynst the Good Fredaye.

The knight was welcomed of echone
 That within the cyte were;
 They prouided forth batayle anone;
 So for this time I leue them there

And tourne to his lady bryght
 Which is at home wyth wofull mone.
 Sore morned [she]³⁸ both day and night,
 Sayenge, "Alas! my loue is gone."

290

"Alas!" she sayd, "my gentyl knight,
 For your sake is my herte ful sore;
 Myght I ones of you haue a syght
 Afore my dethe, I desyre no more.

"Alas! what treson or enuye
 Hath made my loue fro me to go?
 I thynke my lorde for Ire³⁹ truley⁴⁰
 By treason him to deth hathe do.

300

³⁷ H., *so.* C., surgē and. R., Ch., R(G)., surgean.

³⁸ R., H., Ch., R(G)., *insert* she.

³⁹ C., *so.* R., H., Ch., R(G)., ire.

⁴⁰ C., H., *so.* R., Ch., R(G)., truely.

"Alas! my lorde, ye were to blame
 Thus my loue for to betraye;
 It is to you a right great shame
 Sythe that our loue was c[h]ast⁴¹ al-waye.

"Our loue was clene in chastyte,
 Without⁴² synne styl to endure;
 We neuer entended vylanye;
 Alas, moost curteyse creature!

"Where do ye dwell, where do ye byde?
 Wold God I knewe where you to fynde!
 Wher-euer ye go, where-euer ye ride,
 Loue, ye shal⁴³ neuer out of my mynde!

310

"A, deth! where art thou so longe fro me?
 Come and departe me fro this paine;
 For dead and buried til I be
 Fro morning can I nat refrayne.

"Fare-wel, dere loue, where-euer ye be!
 Bi you pleasure is fro me gone;
 Unto the time I may you se
 Withoute comferte still must I mone."

320

Thus this lady of coloure clere
 Alone mourninge did complaine;
 Nothinge coulde her comferte ne chere
 So was she oppressed with wo and paine.

So leue we her here in this traine,
 For her loue mourning alwaye;
 And to the knight tourne we againe,
 Which at Rodes abideth the day

Of bataile. So whan the daie was come,
 The knightes armed them echeone;⁴⁴

330

⁴¹ R., H., R(G)., *so.* C., cast. Ch., chaste.

⁴² R., H., Ch., R(G)., *so.* C., Wichout.

⁴³ C., *so.* R., H., Ch., R(G)., shall.

⁴⁴ C., R., Ch., R(G)., *so.* H., eche oue.

And out of the citie wente all and some,
Strongly to fight with Goddes fone.⁴⁵

Faire and semely⁴⁶ was the sight,⁴⁷
To se them redy unto the warre;
There was many a man of might
That to that bataile was come full farre.

The Knight of Curtesy came into the felde,
Well armed, right fast did ride;
Both knightes and barans him behelde,
How comely he was on eche side. 340

Aboue the helme upon his hede,
Was set, with many a precious stone,
The comely heare as golde so rede;
Better armed than he was none.

Than the trumpettes began to sounde;
The speres ranne and brake the raye;
The noise of gonnes did rebounde;
In this metinge there was no plaie.

Great was the bataile on eueri⁴⁸ side;
The Knight of Curtesy was nat behinde; 350
He smote all downe that wolde abide;
His mache coulde he no-where finde.

There was a Sarazin stronge and wight
That at this knight had great enuye;
He ran to him with all his might
And said,⁴⁹ "Traitor, I thee defie."

They ranne together with speres longe;
Anone the Sarazin lay on the grounde;

⁴⁵ C., H., *so.* R., Ch., R(G)., sone.

⁴⁶ R., H., Ch., R(G)., *so.* C., femely.

⁴⁷ C., R., H., Ch., *so.* R(G)., fight.

⁴⁸ C., H., Ch., *so.* R., R(G)., evri.

⁴⁹ C., R., Ch., R(G)., *so.* H., sayd.

The knight drew out his sworde so stronge
And smote his head of in that stounde. 360

Than came twelue Sarazins in a rought
And the knight did sore assaile;
So they beset him rounde aboute;
There began a stronge bataile.

The knight kest foure unto the grounde
With four strokes by and by;
The other gaue him many a wounde;
For they did euer⁵⁰ multeplie.⁵¹

They laide on him on euery side
Wyth cruell strokes and mortall;
They gaue him woundes so depe and wide
That to the grounde downe he did fall. 370

The Sarazins went and let him lye
With mortall woundes piteous to se;
He called his page hastely
And said, "My time is come to die.

"In mi herte is so depe a wounde
That I must dye without naye;
But or thou me burye in the grounde,
On one thinge I thee praie: 380

"Out of mi body to cut my herte
And wrappe it in this yelowe here;
And whan thou doest from hence departe,
Unto my lady thou do it bere.

"This promisse thou me without delay,
To bere⁵² my lady this present;
And burie mi body in the crosse-waie."
The page was sory and dolent.

⁵⁰ C., so. R., H., Ch., R(G)., ever they did.

⁵¹ C., so. R., H., Ch., R(G)., multiplie.

⁵² C., R., Ch., R(G)., so. H., berey.

The knight yelded up the goost anone;
 The page him buried as he had him bad; 390
 And towarde Faguell is he gone;
 The herte and here with him he had.

Somtime he went, somtime he ran,
 With wofull mone and sory Iest,⁵³
 Till unto Faguell he came,
 Nere to a castell in a forest.

The lorde of Faguell without let
 Was in the forest with his meyne;
 With this page anone he met;
 "Page," he said, "what tidinges with thee? 400

"With thi maister how is the case?
 Shew me lightli⁵⁴ or thou go,
 Or thou shalt neuer out of this place."
 The page was a-fearde whan he said so.

The page for feare that he had,
 The herte unto the lorde he toke tho;
 In his courage he was full sad;
 He toke the heere⁵⁵ to him also.

He tolde him trothe of eueri⁵⁶ thinge,
 How that the knight in bataile was slaine, 410
 And howe he sent his lady that thinge
 For a speciall token of loue certaine.

The lorde therof toke good hede
 And behelde the herte, that high presente.
 "Their loue," he said, "was hote in-dede;
 They were bothe in great torment."

⁵³ C., *so.* R., H., Ch., R(G)., *jest.*

⁵⁴ C., *so.* R., H., Ch., R(G)., *lightly.*

⁵⁵ R., H., Ch., R(G)., *so.* C., *herte.*

⁵⁶ C., H., Ch., *so.* R., R(G)., *evri.*

Than home is he to the kechin gone;
 "Coke," he said, "herken unto me.
 Dresse me this herte, and that anone,
 In the deintiest wise that may be.

420

"Make it swete and delycate to eate;
 For it is for my lady bryght.
 If that she wyst what were the meate,
 Sothely her hert wolde not be lyght."

Therof sayd the lorde full trewe;
 That meat was doleful⁵⁷ and mortall;
 So though[t]⁵⁸ the lady whan she it knewe;
 Than went the lorde into the hall.

Anone the lorde to meate was set
 And this lady nat farre him fro;
 The hert anone he made be fet,⁵⁹
 Wherof proceded muche wo.

430

"Madame, eate hereof;" he sayd,
 "For it is deynteous and plesaunte."
 The lady eate and was not dismayde;
 For of good spyce there dyd none wante.⁶⁰

Whan the lady had eaten wele,
 Anone to her the lorde sayd there,
 "His herte haue ye eaten, euery dele,
 To whome you gaue your yelowe here.

440

"Your knight is dead, as you may se;
 I tell⁶¹ you, lady, certaynly,
 His owne herte eaten haue ye;
 Madame, at the last we all must dye."

⁵⁷ C., R., Ch., R(G)., *so.* H., dolefull.

⁵⁸ R., H., Ch., R(G)., *so.* C., though.

⁵⁹ C., R., H., Ch., *so.* R(G)., set.

⁶⁰ C., R., H., Ch., *so.* R(G)., want.

⁶¹ C., *so.* R., H., Ch., R(G)., tel.

Whan the lady herde him so say,
 She sayd, "My herte for wo shall brast!
 Alas! that euer I sawe this day!
 Now may my lyfe no lenger⁶² last!"

Up she rose, wyth hert full wo,
 And streight up into her chambre wente; 450
 She confessed her deuoutly tho
 And shortely receyued the sacrament.

In her bed mournyng she her layde;
 God wote ryght wofull was her mone;
 "Alas! myne owne dere loue," she sayd,
 "Syth ye be dead my ioye⁶³ is gone.

"Haue I eaten thy herte in my body?
 That meate to me shal be full dere;
 For sorowe, alas, now must I dye,
 A, noble knight withouten fere! 460

"That herte shal certayne with me dye;
 I haue rec[e]iued⁶⁴ theron the sacrament;
 All erthly fode here I denye;
 For wo and paine my life is spente.

"My lorde and husbande,⁶⁵ full of cruelte,
 Why haue you done this cursed dede?
 Ye haue him slaine, so haue ye me;
 The hie God graunte to you your medel!"

Than sayd the lorde, "My lady fayre,
 Forgiue me if I haue misdona; 470
 I repent I was nat ware
 That ye wolde your herte oppresse so sone."

⁶² C., so. R., H., Ch., R(G)., longer.

⁶³ C., so. R., H., Ch., R(G)., joye.

⁶⁴ R., H., Ch., R(G)., so. C., reciued.

⁶⁵ C., so. R., H., Ch., R(G)., omit lorde and.

The lady sayd, "I you forgiue;
 Adew, my lorde, for-euermore;
 My time is⁶⁶ come, I may not liue."
 The lorde⁶⁷ sayd, "I am wo therfore."

Great was the sorowe of more and lesse,
 Bothe lordes and ladyes that were there;
 Some for great wo swouned doubtelesse;
 All of her dethe full wofull were. 480

Her complaynt pyteous was to here:
 "Adieu, my lorde! Nowe muste we disceuer;
 I dye to you, husbände, a true wedded fere,
 As any in Faguell was found euer.

"I am clene of the Knight of Curtesy,
 And wrongfully are we brought to confusion;⁶⁸
 I am clene *fro*⁶⁹ hym, and he *fro*⁷⁰ me,
 And *fro*⁷¹ all other saue you alone.

"My lorde, ye were to blame truely
 His herte to make me for to eate; 490
 But sythe it is buryed in mi body,
 On it shall I neuer eate other meate.

"Theron haue I rec[e]lyued⁷² eternall fode;
 Erthly meate wyll I neuer none.
 Now Jesu,⁷³ that was don on the rode,
 Haue mercy on me; my lyfe is gone."

Wyth that the lady in all theyr syght
 Yelded up her spyrit, makinge her mone.
 The hyghe God, moost of myght,
 On her⁷⁴ haue mercy and us echone! 500

⁶⁶ C., R., Ch., R(G)., *so.* H., s.

⁶⁷ C., R., Ch., R(G)., *so.* H., orde.

⁶⁸ R., H., Ch., R(G)., *so.* C., confusio.

⁶⁹, ⁷⁰, ⁷¹ C., R., H., Ch., (R)G., for.

⁷² C., R., H., Ch., R(G)., recyued.

⁷³ C., Jesu. (*Only capital J used in quarto.*)

⁷⁴ R., H., Ch., R(G)., *so.* C., us.

⁷⁵And brynge us to that glorious trone
To se the ioye of Paradyse,
Whyche God graunte to us echone,
And to the reders *and* herers of this treatyse.

Thus en[d]eth this lytle treatyse of the
knyght of curtesy *and* of the fayre lady
of Faguell.

Imprynted at London by me
WYLLYAM COPLAND.

⁷⁵ R. *omits the following stanza.*

APPENDIX

Chronique du Châtelain de Coucy et de la dame de Faiel.

The original manuscript of the *Chronique* is to be found in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Ms. fr. 5003, fos. 256 v. to 258 v. The story has been reprinted in Fauchet's *Recueil de l'origine de la langue et poésie Française*, pp. 124-128, and in Michel's *Chansons du Châtelain de Coucy*. In the study, "The Roman du Châtelain de Coucy and Fauchet's *Chronique*," A. Marshall Elliott Studies, i, 6-8, Matzke reprints it as below.

Ou temps que le roy Philippe regnoit et le roy Richart d'Angleterre vivoit il avoit en Vermendois ung aultre moult gentil gallart preux chevalier en armes qui s'apeloit Regnault de Coucy, et estoit chastelain de Coucy. Ce chevalier fut moult amoureux d'une dame du pays qui estoit femme du seigneur de Faiel. Moult orent de paine et travail pour leurs amours, ce chastelain de Coucy et la dame de Faiel si comme l'istoire le raconte qui parle de leur vie dont il y a Romant propre. Or advint que quant les voyages d'oultramer se firent, dont il est parlé cy dessus, que les roys de France et d'Angleterre y furent, le chastelain de Coucy y fut pour ce qu'il exercitoit volentiers les armes. La dame de Faiel, quant elle sceut qu'il s'en devoit aler, fist ung las de soye moult bel et bien fait, et y avoit de ses cheveux ouvrez parmi la soye dont l'euvre sembloit moult belle et riche, dont il lyoit ung bourrelet moult riche par dessus son heulme et avoit loinz pendans par derriere a gros boutons de perles. Le chastelain ala oultramer a grant regret de laisser sa dame par dessa. Quant il fut oultre il fist moult de chevaleries, car il estoit vaillant chevalier et avoit grant joye que on rapportast par dessa nouvelles de ses fais, affin que sa dame y print plaisir. Sy advint que a ung siege que les chrestiens tenoyent devant sarrazins oultramer ce chastelains fut feru d'un quarel ou costé bien avant, du quel coup il luy convint mourir. Sy avoit a sa mort moult grant regret a sa dame, et pour ce apela ung sien escuyer et lui dist: "Je te prie que quant je seray mort que te prengnes mon cueuer et le met en telle manière que tu le puisses porter en France a madame de Faiel et l'envelopes de ces lenges ycy." Et luy bailla le las que la dame avoit fait de ses chevelux, et ung petit escriniet, ou il avoit plusieurs anelés et dyamans que la dame luy avoit donnez, qu'il portoit tousjours avant luy pour l'amour et souvenance d'elle. Quant 'e chevalier fut mort ainsy le fit l'escuyer et prist l'escriniet et luy ovri le corps et prist le cueur, et sala et confit bien en bonnes espices, et mist en l'escriniet avecques le las de ses chevelux et ung petit escriniet ou il avoit pluysieurs anelés et dyamans que la dame luy avoit donnez, et avecques unes lettres moult piteuses que le chastelain avoit escriptes a sa mort et signees de sa main. Quant l'escuyer fut retourné en France il vint vers le lieu ou la dame demouroit, et se bouta en ung boys pres de ce lieu et luy mesavit tellement qu'il fut veu du seigneur de Faiel qui bien le congneut. Sy vint le seigneur de Faiel atout deux de ses privez en ce boys et trouva cest

escuyer auquel il vult courir sus ou despit de son maistre qu'il haioit plus que homme du monde. L'escuyer luy crya mercy, et le chevalier luy dist: "Ou je te ocirray ou tu me diras ou est le chastelain." L'escuyer luy dist qu'il estoit trespassé. Et pour ce qu'il ne l'en vouloit croire et avoit cest escuyer paour de morir il luy moustra l'escrinet pour l'en faire certain. Le seigneur de Fayel print l'escrinet et donna congé a l'escuyer. Et le seigneur vint a son queux et luy dist qu'il mist ce cueur en si bonne manyere et l'apparellast en telle confiture que on en peut bien manger. Li queulx le fist et fist d'aulture viande pabelle et mist en bonne charpie en ung plat, et en fut la dame servie au disner, et le seigneur mengoit d'une autre viande qui luy ressembloit, et ainsy menga la dame le cueur du chastelain son amy. Quant elle ot mengé le seigneur luy demanda: "Dame, avez vous mengé bonne viande?" Et celle luy respondi qu'elle l'avoit mengé bonne. Il luy dist: "Pour cela vous l'ay je fait apparellier car c'est une viande que vous avez moult amee." La dame qui jamais ne pensant que ce fut n'en dist plus riens. Et le seigneur luy dist derechef: "Savez que vous avez mengé?" Et elle respondi que non. Et il luy dist: "Adont or sachez que vous avez mengé le cueur du chastelain de Coucy." Quant elle oyt ce, sy fut en grant pensee pour la souvenance qu'elle eust de son amy. Mais encore ne peust elle croire ceste chose jusques a ce que le seigneur luy bailla l'escrinet et les lettres, en quant elle vit les choses qui estoient dedens l'escrin, elle les congneut, si commença a lire les lettres. Quant elle congneut son signe manuel et les enseignes, adont commença fort a changer et avoir couleur et puis commença forment a penser, et quant elle ot pensé elle dit a son seigneur: "Il est vray que ceste viande ay je moult amee et croy qu'il soit mort dont est dommage, comme du plus loyal chevalier du monde. Et vous m'avez fait menger son cueur, et est la dernière viande que je mengeray oncques, ne oncques je ne mengay point de si noble ne de si gentil viande. Sy n'est pas raison que apres si gentil viande je doye en mettre aulture dessus, et vous jure par ma foy que jamais je ne mengeray d'aulture viande apres ceste cy." La dame leva du disner et s'en ala en sa chambre faisant moult grant douleur, et plus avoit de douleur qu'elle n'en moustroit la chiere. Et en celle douleur a grant regret et complaints de la mort de son amy fina sa vie et mourut. De ceste chose fut le seigneur de Fayel couroucé, mais il n'y peut mettre remede, ne homme ne femme du monde. Ceste chose fut sceu par tout le pays et en ot grant guerre le seigneur de Fayel aux amis de sa femme tant qu'il convint que la chose fut rapaisée du roy et des barons du pays. Ainsy finerent les amours du chastelain du Coucy et de la dame de Fayel.

GLOSSARY

In this glossary I have included all words which differ either in spelling or in meaning from their New English descendants. I have indicated the various spellings which occur in the poem, the lines where each word appears, and its inflectional form. In giving etymologies, I have included only those which are definitely ascertainable. The etymologies of adverbs formed by suffixing *ly*, and of nouns by suffixing *ness*, to the corresponding adjective, I have omitted.,

ABBREVIATIONS

A. F., Anglo-French
A. S., Anglo-Saxon
F., French
M. Du., Middle Dutch

M.H.G., Middle High German
O. F., Old French
O. Fris., Old Frisian
O. L. G., Old Low German

A

A, interj., Ah, oh, 313, 460.
aboute, adv., prep., about, around, 233, 283, 363. A.S. **abūtan**.
absteine, v., abstain, 184. O.F. **abstenir**.
adew, interj., adieu, farewell, 474. O.F. **a deu**.
aduauntage, n., advantage, 259. O.F. **avantage**.
adventure, **auenture**, n., pl. -s, adventure, 152, 146, 214. O.F. **aventure**.
aduersarye, n., pl.-s, adversary, 220. O.F. **adversarie**.
aduersyte, n., adversity, 104. O.F. **adversité**.
afearde, p.p. **afere**, used adjectivally, afraid, 404. A.S. **afæran**.
afore, prep., before, 43, 296. A.S. **onforan**.
after, adv., afterwards, 108. A.S. **æfter**.
agayne, **again**e, adv., again, 159, 253, 327. A.S. **ongēan**.
agaynst, prep., against, 202, 284. A.S. **ongēanes**.
almost, adv., almost, 74. A.S. **eal-mæst**.

almight, adj., almighty, 129, 254. A.S. **ealmihtig**.
alwaye, adv., always, 304, 326. A.S. **eal weg**.
amiable, adj., amiable, lovable, 6. F. **amiable**.
anone, adv., anon, at once, immediately, 18, 31, 79, 139, 144, 157, 287, 358, 389, 399, 419, 429, 431, 438. A.S. **on-ān**.
approche, v., pret.-d, approach, 266. O.F. **aprochier**.
armen, p. p. **arme**, armed, 282. O.F. **armer**.
armes, n., pl., arms, 155. F. **armes**.
araye, n., array, order, 282. O.F. **arrei**.
arte, n., art, cunning, skill, 274. F. **art**.
assayle, **assaile**, v., assail, 240, 246, 362. O.F. **asalir**.
asure, adj., azure, 210. O.F. **asur**.
asyde, adv., aside, 176, 244. A.S. **on side**.
auayle, n., avail, 152.
auenture, v., adventure, 158. O.F. **aventurer**.
awaye, adv., away, 111. A.S. **on weg**.

B

bad, v., p. p., **bidde**, bid, command, 390. A.S. **biddan**.
baran, n., pl.-s, baron, 339. O.F. **baron**.
batayle, **batayl**, **bataill**, **bataile**, n., battle, 171, 248, 287, 216, 278, 329, 336, 349, 364, 410. O.F. **bataille**.
beaute, n., beauty, 84. O.F. **beauté**.
begayn, v., pret. **beginne**, began, 99. A.S. **beginnan**.
beholde, v., p. p., beheld, 212; **behelde**, pret., 339, 413. A.S. **behealdan**.
behynde, **behinde**, adv., prep., behind, 107, 114, 350. A.S. **behindan**.
bee, v., be, 123; p. p., **be**, 141, **ben**, 252. A.S. **bēon**.
bere, v., bear, 384, 386; **bore**, p. p. used adjectivally, born, 43. A.S. **beran**.
beste, n., beast, 224. O.F. **beste**.
besyde, adv., beside, 273. A.S. **beside**.
beten, p. p. **bete**, used adjectivally, beaten, 210. A.S. **bēatan**.
betraye, v., betray, 302. A.S. **be**+O.F. **trair**.
betwene, prep., between, 90, 186, 190. A.S. **betwēonan**.
betyde, v., betide, 239. A.S. **betidan**.
bi, prep., by, because of, 318. A.S. **be**, **bi**.
blessyd, p. p. **blesse**, blessed, 237. A.S. **blēdsian**.
bodi, n., body, 264; pl.-yes, 92. A.S. **bodig**.
bolde, adj., bold, 11, 17, 115, 128. A.S. **beald**.
bothe, adj., both, 7, 9, 33, 94, 104, 124, 136, 178, 224, 416, 478. O.N. **bāþir**.
brast, v., infn., burst, 446. A.S. **berstan**.
breke, v., break, 280; **brake**, pret., 346. A.S. **brecan**.
bryght, adj., bright, 197, 289, 422. A.S. **beorhte**.
brynge, v., bring, 501. A.S. **bringan**.
burye, **burie**, v., bury, 379, 387; **buried**, pret., 491. A.S. **byrgan**.
by and by, adv., immediately, 366.
byde, v., bide, 174, 309. A.S. **bidan**.

C

case, n., case, state, situation, 230, 401. O.F. **cas**.
castell, **castel**, n., castle, 28, 195, 396, 198, 215; pl.-es, 37. F. **castel**.
certayne, **certaine**, adj., certain, 412; adv., certainly, 130, 461. F. **certain**.
certaynely, adv., certainly, 442.
chambre, n., chamber, 450. O.F. **chambre**.
chast, adj., chaste, 304. F. **chaste**.
chastyte, **chastite**, n., chastity, 47, 88, 305, 95, 102. O.F. **chasteté**.
chaunce, n., chance, 56. O.F. **cheance**.
chaunge, v., change, 99. O.F. **chaungier**.
chere, v., cheer, 80, 323. O.F. **cherer**.
Chrysten, **Christen**, adj., n., Christian, 202, 154. A.S. **cristen**.
chyl dren, n., pl. **child**, children, 48. A.S. **cild**.
clene, adj., clean, 92, 305, 485, 487. A.S. **clēne**.
clere, adj., clear, 321. O.F. **cler**.
coke, n., cook, 418. A.S. **cōc**.
colde, adj., cold, 66. A.S. **ceald**.
coloure, n., colour, 99, 321. O.F. **colour**.
comforte, n., comfort, 75, 79, 182, 320. F. **confort**.
comforte, v., comfort, 323. F. **conforter**.
complayne, **compleyne**, **complainne**, v., complain, 58, 169, 192, 255, 322. F. **complaindre**.
complaynt, n., complaint, 189, 481. O.F. **complainte**.
coude, **coud**, **coulde**, v., pret. **canne**, could, 75, 183, 191, 265, 323, 352. A.S. **cunnan**.
counseyll, v., counsel, 150. O.F. **conseillier**.
countre, n., country, 1, 151. O.F. **con-tree**.
courage, n., heart, spirit, 257, 407. O.F. **corage**.
crosse-waie, n., cross-way, 387.
cruell, adj., cruel, 370. O.F. **cruel**.
cruelte, n., cruelty, 465. O.F. **cruelté**.

crye, v., cry, proclaim, 133. O.F. **crier**.
cure, n., care, 82. O.F. **cure**.
curtesy, **curtesye**, n., courtesy, 16, 139, 337, 350, 485, 118, 149. O.F. **cor-toisie**.
curteys, **curteyse**, adj., courteous, 17, 199, 29, 49, 180. O.F. **cortois**.
cyte, **citie**, n., city, 215, 286, 331. F. **cité**.

D

daie, n., day, 329. A.S. **dæg**.
daungere, n., danger, 268. O.F. **dan-gier**.
dede, n., deed, 466; in **dede**, indeed, 123, 415. A.S. **dæd**.
deed, adj., dead, 252. A.S. **dēad**.
defie, v., defy, 356. F. **defier**.
degre, n., degree, rank, 7, 14. O.F. **degré**.
deintiest, adj., superlative **deyntee**, most dainty, 420. O.F. **deintie**.
dele, n., deal, 439. A.S. **dæl**.
delycate, adj., delicate, 421. F. **delicat**.
denye, v., deny, 463. O.F. **denier**.
departe, v., depart, part, separate, 110, 194, 276, 314, 383. F. **départir**.
departynge, pr. part. used substantively, separation, departure, 189.
depaynt, v., paint, depict, 191. O.F. **depeindre**.
depe, adj., deep, 163, 371, 377. A.S. **dēope**.
dere, adj., dear, 181, 317, 455, 458. A.S. **dēore**.
desyre, n., desire, 216. F. **désier**.
desyre, v., desire, 296; pr. part.-ynge, 256. F. **désirer**.
dethe, **deth**, n., death, 175, 296, 480, 300, 313. A.S. **dēaþ**.
deynteous, adj., dainty, 434.
deyte, n., deity, 272. F. **deité**.
dilygence, n., diligence, 30. F. **diligence**.
discuer, v., dissever, 482. O.F. **dessevrer**.
diadayne, n., disdain, 63.
dismayde, p. p. **dismaye**, **dismayed**, 435. O.F. **esmaier**.

distroye, v., destroy, 124. O. F. **destruire**.
do, v., do, execute, cause to be, 133, 384; p. p., 300; pr. sing. -**est**, 383; -**the**, 62; pret., **dyd**, 2, 4, 52, 110, 177, 212, 237, 241, 255, 276. A.S. **dōn**.
dolent, adj., dolorous, 388. F. **dolent**.
doloure, n., dolour, 194. O.F. **dolor**.
doubte, n., doubt, 224. O.F. **douter**. (Verbal substantive.)
doughtinesse, n., doughtiness, bravery, valor, 12. A.S. **dyghtines**.
doutlesse, **doubtelesse**, adv., doubtless, 15, 100, 479.
downe, adv., down, 64, 71, 140, 251, 351, 372. A.S. **adūn**, of—**dūne**.
downe, n., down, 213. A.S. **dūn**.
dresse, v., dress, prepare, 419. O.F. **drecier**.
drewe, v., pret. **drawe**, draw, 245. A.S. **dragan**.
dwel, v., dwell, 2. A.S. **dwellan**.
dye, v., die, 378, 444, 459, 461, 483; p. p. -**d**, 52. O.N. **deyja**.
dyner, n., dinner, 165. F. **dîner**.

E

eate, v., eat, 421, 433, 490, 492; pret., 435. A.S. **etan**.
eche, adj., each, 6, 14, 55, 110, 340. A.S. **ælc**.
echone, **eche-one**, pron., each one, 143, 285, 500, 503, 330. A.S. **ælc-ān**.
elles, adv., else, otherwise, 124. A.S. **elles**.
enquyre, v., inquire, 146, 214. O.F. **enquerre**.
entende, v., pret.-**d**, intend, 307. O.F. **entendre**.
enuye, n., envy, 38, 297, 354. F. **envie**.
erthly, adj., earthly, 463, 494. A.S. **eorþlic**.
espye, v., espy, 107. O.F. **espier**.
eternall, adj., eternal, 493. O.F. **eterne**.
euer, adv., ever, 43, 106, 159, 368, 447, 484. A.S. **æfre**.

euermore, adv., evermore, 474. A.S. *æfre-mā*.
euery, **eueri**, adj., every, 134, 135, 217, 219, 369, 439, 349, 409. A.S. *æfre-ælc*.
eyen, n., pl., eyes, 59, 193. A.S. *ēage*.

F

fare-wel, interj., farewell, 317. A.S. *far-wel*.
farre, adj., far, 336, 430. A.S. *feor*.
faile, n., fail, 258. F. *faillir*.
fayre, **faire**, **fare**, adj., fair, 1, 3, 5, 469, 99, 233. A.S. *fæger*.
faith, n., faith, 154, 279. Cf. O.F. *fei*, *feid*.
faithful, adj., faithful, 102.
feare, n., fear, 405. A.S. *fæ̃r*.
feare, v., fear, 63, 232. A.S. *fæ̃ran*.
feest, n., feast, 133. O.F. *feste*.
felde, n., field, 337. A.S. *feld*.
fere, n., company, companion, wife, 483; withouten *fere*, without equal, 460. A.S. *fēra*.
ferme, adj., firm, 50. F. *ferme*.
fet, p. p. *fecche*, fetch, 139, 431. A.S. *feccan*.
floure, n., flower, 97. O.F. *flour*.
fo, n., foe, 106; pl.-*ne*, 332. A.S. *fāh*.
fode, n., food, 463, 493. A.S. *fōda*.
folde, adj., fold, 24. A.S. *feald*.
forgiue, v., forgive, 470, 473. A. S. *forgifan*.
forme, n., form, 101. O.F. *forme*.
forthe, adv., forth, 237. A.S. *forð*.
four, adj., four, 365, 366. A.S. *fēower*.
fre, adj., free, noble, bounteous, 3. A. S. *frēo*.
frendly, adj., friendly, 36. A.S. *frēondlice*.
fro, adv., prep., from, 92, 123, 129, 184, 276, 298, 313, 314, 316, 318, 430, 487, 488. O.N. *frā*.
ful, adj., full, 12, 115, 246. A.S. *ful*.
fyers, **fayrse**, adj., fierce, 240, 257. F. *fiers*.
fyersely, adv., fiercely, 246, 284.
fyght, n., fight, 256. A.S. *feohtan*.

fyght, v., fight, 202, 277. A.S. *feohtan*.
fynde, n., fiend, 240. A.S. *fēond*.
fynde, **finde**, v., find, 310, 352; p.p., *founde*, 70, 218. A.S. *findan*.
fyre, n., fire, 148. A.S. *fȳr*.

G

gardein, **gardyn**, n., garden, 71, 109, 117. O.F. *gardin*.
gaue, v., pret. *giue*, gave, 37, 367, 371 440. A.S. *gifan*.
gentyl, adj., gentle, 6, 293. O.F. *gentil*.
gentylnesse, n., gentleness, 10.
glade, adj., glad, 130. A.S. *glæd*.
glorious, adj., glorious, 501. O.F. *glorius*.
Goddess, n., genitive singular, God's, 332. A.S. *god*.
golde, adj., gold, 207, 210, 343. A.S. *gold*.
gonne, n., pl.-s, gun, 347.
goodnes, n., goodness, 270. A.S. *gōdnes*.
goost, n., ghost, spirit, 389. A.S. *gāst*.
graunte, v., grant, 468, 503. O.F. *granter*.
grene, adj., green, 57. A.S. *grēne*.
grete, adj., great, 185. A.S. *grēat*.
gretynge, pr. part. *grete* used substantively, greeting, 24. A.S. *grētan*.
greuance, n., grievance, 54. O.F. *grevance*.
grounde, n., ground, 64, 72, 220, 251, 358, 365, 372, 379. A.S. *grund*.

H

hardynesse, n., hardiness, 13. O.F. *hardi*+A.S. *nes*.
harneyse, n., harness, equipment, armour, 166. O.F. *harneis*.
hastely, adv., hastily, 375. O.F. *hasti*; O. Fris. *hastelike*.
hastynge, pr. part. *haste* used substantively, hastening, 25. O.F. *haster*.
haue, v., have, 86, 187, 295, 439, 457, 462, 467, 470, 496, 500. A.S. *habban*.
hede, n., heed, 243, 413. O. Fris. *hōde*.

heed, hede, n., head, 250, 267, 341. A.S. *hēafod*.

hele, v., pret.-d., heal, 275. A.S. *helan*.

helme, n., helm, 180, 206, 341. A.S. *helm*.

helpe, n., help, 256. A.S. *help*.

here, heere, heare, n., hair, 178, 382, 392, 414, 440, 205, 408, 212, 342. A.S. *hær*.

here, v., hear, 481; pret. *herde, harde*, 18, 68, 118, 445, 235. A.S. *hieran*.

herer, n., pl.-s, hearer, 504.

herken, v., hearken, 418. A.S. *hercnian*.

herte, hert, hirt, harte, n., heart, 44, 46, 50, 60, 86, 95, 102, 112, 163, 196, 294, 377, 381, 392, 406, 419, 439, 443, 446, 461, 472, 490, 74, 449, 163; pl.-s, 141. A.S. *heorte*.

honoure, n., pl.-s, honour, 39. F. *honour*.

hote, adj., hot, 415. A.S. *hāte*.

howe, conj., how, 411. A.S. *hū*.

humylite, n., humility, 32. O.F. *humilité*.

husbande, n., husband, 65, 483. A.S. *hūsbonda*.

hye, hie, hyghe, adj., high, 206, 234, 468, 499. A.S. *hēah*.

hyll, n., hill, 234. A.S. *hyll*.

hym, pron., him, 20, 35, 37, 44, 46, 73, 76, 79, 100, 224, 233, 487. A.S. *him*.

hymselfe, pron., himself, 201.

hys, pron., his, 272. A.S. *his*.

I

iest, n., jest, joke, 394. O.F. *geste*.

iourney, n., journey, 200. F. *journée*.

ioye, n., joy, 122, 168, 446, 502. O.F. *joie*.

iustyng, pr. part. *iuste* used substantively, justing, tourney, 217. O.F. *jouster*.

K

kechin, n., kitchen, 417. A.S. *cycene*.

kepe, v., keep, 92. A.S. *cēpan*.

kest, v., pret. *caste, cast*, 365. O.N. *kasta*.

knewe, v., pret. *knowe, knew*, 310, 427; p. p.-en, 142. A.S. *cnāwan*.

knyght, n., knight, 16, 77, 87, 157, 182, 199, 245; genitive singular -es, 68; nominative pl.-es, 330, 338. A.S. *cniht*.

kynde, adj., kind, 42, 48. A.S. *cynde*.

kyssed, v., pret. *kysse, kissed*, 105. A.S. *cyssan*.

L

lady, n., genitive singular-es, lady, 62, 160; nominative pl.-es, 478. A.S. *hlæfdige*.

laide, layde, v., pret. *laye, lay*, 369, 453. A.S. *lecgan*.

lake, v., lack, want, 26. Cf. O.Fris. *lakia*.

lande, n., land, 11, 127. A.S. *land*.

laste, v., last, 52. A.S. *læstan*.

lede, v., p. p., led, 123. A.S. *lædan*.

leest, adj., least, 135. A.S. *læsest*.

lenger, adj., longer, 448. A.S. *lengra*.

lesse, adj., less, 477. A.S. *læs*.

let, n., let, hindrance, 397. M. Du. *lette*.

let, v., let, permit, 133. A.S. *lætan*.

leue, v., leave, 197, 288, 325. A.S. *læfan*.

liue, v., live, 475. A.S. *lifian*.

loke, v., pret.-d, look, 233, 259. A.S. *lōcian*.

longe, adj., long, 313, 357. A.S. *lang*.

lorde, n., lord, 2, 7, 17, 23, 31, 33, 34, 115, 125, 137, 144, 299, 301, 397, 406, 413, 428, 429, 438, 474, 489; genitive singular-es, 142; nominative pl.-es, 136, 478. A.S. *hlāford*.

loue, n., love, 62, 81, 83, 89, 100, 120, 298, 302, 304, 305, 312, 317, 326, 412, 415, 455. A.S. *lufe*.

loue, v., love, 46, 88, 101; pret.-yd, 51. A.S. *lufian*.

louer, n., pl.-s, lover, 190.

luste, n., lust, 92. A.S. *lust*.

lye, v., lie, 72, 73, 373; pret. *laye*, 65. A.S. *licgan*.

lyfe, n., life, 158, 448, 496; on **lyue**, alive, 172. A.S. **lif**.
lyght, adj., light, 424. A.S. **lēoht**.
lyghted, v, p. p., lighted, 112. A.S. **lihtan**.
lyghtly, **lightli**, adv., lightly, 267, 402. A.S. **lēohte+lic**.
lytle, adj., little, 244. A.S. **lytel**.

M

make, n., match, 352. A.S. **gemæcca**.
maister, n., master, 401. A.S. **mægister**, O.F. **maistre**.
make, n., mate, 85. A.S. **maca**.
make, v., pr. part.-**inge**, make, 198. A.S. **macian**.
maner, n., manner, 27. A.F. **maner**.
mayntayne, v., maintain, 154. F. **maintenir**.
meane, n., means, 132. O.F. **meïen**.
meate, n., meat, 423, 429, 458, 492, 494. A.S. **mete**.
mede, n., meed, reward, 468. A.S. **mēd**.
mercy, n., mercy, 270. O.F. **merci**.
messengere, **messyngere**, n., messenger, 20, 31. O.F. **messagier**.
mete, **meate**, v., meet, 231, 241; pr. part.-**inge**, 348. A.S. **mētan**.
meyne, n., retinue, company, 398. O. F. **meisnee**.
mi, pron., my, 93, 381, 387, 491; **myne**, mine, 455. A.S. **mīn**.
minde, **mynde**, n., mind, 44, 46, 50, 312. A.S. **gemynd**.
moche, **much**, adj., much, 180, 108, 432. A.S. **micel**.
mone, n., moan, 68, 111, 198, 254, 290, 394, 454, 498. A.S. **mān**.
mone, v., moan, 226, 320. A.S. **mānan**.
moost, adj., most, 135, 308, 499. A.S. **māest**.
morne, v., pret.-**d**, mourn, 291; pr. part., used adjectivally, **murnynge**, **mournynge**, **mournyng**, 59, 332, 453; pr. part. used substantively, **mournynge**, **morninge**, **morning**, 61, 182, 316. A.S. **murnan**.

mortall, adj., mortal, 248, 370, 374, 426. O.F. **mortel**.
multeplie, v., multiply, 368. O.F. **multiplier**.
myght, n., might, 155, 204, 247, 499. A.S. **miht**.
myght, v., pret. **mowe**, could, was able, 295. A.S. **magan**.

N

nat, adv., not, 47, 61, 67, 147, 161, 265, 316, 350, 471. A.S. **nāwhit**.
naye, adv., nay, 378. O.N. **nei**.
ne, conj., nor, 323. A.S. **ne**.
nere, adj., near, 78, 266, 396. A.S. **nēah**.
neuer, adv., never, 130, 191, 232, 312, 403, 494. A.S. **nēfre**.
none, adv., not, 159. A.S. **nān**.
nonrye, n., nunnery, 273. O.F. **nonnerie**.
nothinge, n., nothing, 323. A.S. **nāþing**.
nowe, adv., now, 175. A.S. **nū**.
nyght, n., night, 7, 33. A.S. **niht**.

O

of, prep., off, 178, 260, 267, 360. A.S. **of**.
olde, adj., old, 9. A.S. **eald**.
one, prep., on, 206. A.S. **on**.
onely, adv., only, 226. A.S. **ænlice**.
ones, adv., once, 295. A.S. **ānes**.
or, conj., ere, 379, 402. A.S. **ær**.
othe, n., oath, 129. A.S. **āþ**.
other, pron., pl., others, 38, 367, 488. A.S. **ōþer**.
owne, adj., own, 443, 455. A.S. **agen**.

P

Paradyse, n., Paradise, 502. F. **paradis**.
paramour, n., paramour, lover, 45. O.F. **par-amour**.
payne, **paine**, n., pain, 60, 188, 54, 314, 324, 464. O.F. **peine**.
payre, n., pair, 177. O.F. **pair**.

erfounde, adj., profound, 184. F. **profond**.

plaie, n., play, 348. A.S. **plega**.

pleasaunt, **plesaunte**, adj., pleasant, 5, 434. O.F. **plaisant**.

poore, adj., poor, 14. O.F. **povre**.

praie, v., pray, 380; present singular, third, -eth, 25. O.F. **preier**.

presente, n., present, 414. O.F. **présent**.

procede, v., proceed, 121; pret.-d, 432. F. **procéder**.

promysse, n., promise, 280. F. **promesse**.

promisse, v., promise, 385.

pryce, n., prize, 219. O.F. **pris**.

pryuely, adv., privily, secretly, 120. O.F. **privé**+A.S. **lic**.

pyte, n., pity, 185. O.F. **pité**.

pyteous, adj., piteous, 481. O.F. **pitous**.

pyteously, adv., piteously, 168.

Q

quyckely, adv., quickly, 244, 260. A.S. **cwic**+lice.

R

ranne, v., pret. **runne**, 346, 357. A.S. **irnan**.

raye, n., array, 346. O.F. **arrei**.

rebounde, v., rebound, 347. A.F. **rebundir**.

receyue, v., pret.-d, receive, 452, 493. O.F. **recever**.

rede, adj., red, 207, 343. A.S. **rēad**.

reder, n., pl.-s, reader, 504. A.S. **rædere**.

redy, adj., ready, 166, 234, 282. A.S. **ræde**.

refrayne, v., refrain, 61, 316. O.F. **refrener**.

remayne, v., remain, 195. O.F. **remaindre**.

remeue, v., remove, 265. O.F. **remuer**.

renowne, n., renown, 69. A.F. **renoun**.

replenyshe, v., pret.-d, replenish, 196. O.F. **replenir**.

replete, adj., replete, full, 98. O.F. **replet**.

respyte, n., respite, 187. O.F. **respit**.

reue, v., bereave, take away, 39. A.S. **rēafian**.

richely, adv., richly, 209. A.S. **riclice**.

rode, n., rood, 495. A.S. **rōd**.

rounde, adv., around, 363. O.F. **round**.

route, **rought**, n., rout, company, troop, 281, 361. O.F. **route**.

ryche, adj., rich, 14, 207. A.S. **rice**.

rydde, v., rid, 127. A.S. **hreddan**.

ryde, v., ride, 151. A.S. **riðan**.

ryght, adj., right, 12; adv., 23, 454. A.S. **riht**, **rihte**.

S

sad, adj., sad, heavy, 407. A.S. **sæd**.

sadly, adv., sadly, heavily, 77.

saue, prep., save, 489. O.F. **sauf**.

saye, v., say, 67; pret. **sayd**, 19, 22, 59, 81, 83, 87, 89, 100, 116, 168, 179, 182, 201, 229, 235, 238, 293, 425, 433, 438, 446, 455, 469, 473; pr. part. **sayenge**, 292. A.S. **secgan**.

se, v., see, 22, 232, 319, 333, 374, 441; pret. **sawe**, 72, 73, 78, 242, 447; pr. part. **seyng**, **seinge**, 42, 266. A.S. **sēon**.

seke, v., seek, 152. A.S. **sēcan**.

semely, adv., seemly, 333. O.N. **sāmīligr**.

shal, v., shall, 27, 88, 89, 123, 176, 184, 232, 458, 461. A.S. **sculan**.

shamefastnesse, n., modesty, 98. A.S. **scamfæstnes**.

shelde, n., shield, 209. A.S. **scild**.

shere, n., pl.-s, shears, 177. A.S. **scæara**.

shewe, v., pret. **showe**, show, 55, 116, 155. A.S. **scēawian**.

shortely, adv., shortly, 452. A.S. **scēortlice**.

shoute, n., shout, 235. O.N. **skūta**.

simpele, adj., simple, 95. O.F. **simple**.

slayne, **slaine**, v., p. p. **slaye**, slay, 171, 132, 410, 467. A.S. **slēan**.

slyde, v., slide, 264. A.S. *slidan*.
sodaine, adj., sudden, 56. O.F. *sodain*.
soiourne, v., sojourn, 148. O.F. *sojorner*.
solas, n., solace, comfort, 83. O.F. *solas*.
somtyme, **somtime**, adv., once, at some time, 2, 393. A.S. *sumtima*.
sone, adv., immediately, at once, straightway, 29. A.S. *sōna*.
sore, adv., sorely, 69, 228. A.S. *sār*.
sorowe, n., sorrow, 186, 459, 477. A.S. *sorh*.
sory, adj., sorry, 388, 394. A.S. *sārig*.
sothely, adv., truly, 175, 424. A.S. *sōðlice*.
sounde, v., sound, 345. O.F. *soner*.
speciall, adj., especially chosen, 412. F. *special*.
speke, v., speak, 19; pret. **spake**, 13, 15, 41. A.S. *specan*.
spente, v., p.p. **spende**, spent, 464. A.S. *spendan*.
spere, n., pl.-s, spear, 346, 357. A.S. *spere*.
spyce, n., spice, 436. O.F. *espice*.
spye, n., spy, 113, 128. O.F. *espie*.
spyrit, n., spirit, 498. O.F. *espirit*.
stande, v., stand: present singular third -th, 84; pret. **stode**, 114. A.S. *standan*.
sterie, v., pret., start, 257; pret.-d, 244. A.S. *styrtan*.
stounde, n., hour, time, while, 360. A.S. *stund*.
streight, adv., straightway, 450. A.S. *streht*.
stronge, adj., strong, 130, 248, 353, 359, 364. A.S. *strong*.
styl, **styl**, adj., still, 143, 182; adv., 306. A.S. *stille*.
suche, adj., such, 101. A.S. *swylc*.
suffre, v., suffer, permit, 121; pret.-d, 54. O.F. *suffrir*.
surgeand, n., surgeon, 274. O.F. *circurgien*.
susteyne, v., sustain, 204, 279. O.F. *sustenir*.

sware, v., pret. **swere**, swear, 127, 129. A.S. *swerian*.
swerde, **sworde**, n., sword, 245, 164, 264, 359. A.S. *swæord*.
swete, adj., sweet, 229, 421. A.S. *swēte*.
swoune, **swone**, n., swoon, faint, 76, 252. **swoune**, v., pret.-d, swoon, faint, 479. A.S. *swōgan*.
syde, n., side, 262. A.S. *side*.
syge, v., pret.-d, besiege, 283. F. *siēger*.
syghinge, v., pr. part. **syghe**, sigh, 184, 228. A.S. *sican*.
syght, n., sight, 295, 497. O.H.G. *siht*.
synne, n., sin, 306. A.S. *synn*.
syr, n., sir, 22, 116, 149. O.F. *sire*.
syster, n., sister, 91. A.S. *swæoster*.
sythe, **syth**, conj., since, 304, 491, 456. A.S. *sipþan*.
sytynge, v. pr. part. **sitte** used adjectivally, fitting, becoming, 145. A.S. *sittan*.

T

talkinge, v., pr. part. **talke**, talk, 119. A.S. *talian*.
tane, v., p. p. **take**, taken, 163; pret. **toke**, 79, 243, 405, 407, 413. A.S. *tacan*.
tayle, n., tail, 250, 260. A.S. *tægla*.
tel, v., tell, 4, 442; pret. **tolde**, 113, 128, 409. A.S. *tellan*.
tere, n., pl.-s, tear, 193. A.S. *tēar*.
than, adv., then, 71, 113, 125, 133, 177, 179, 233, 241, 257, 261, 268, 269, 273, 276, 281, 345, 417, 428. A.S. *þanne*.
thens, adv., thence, 276. A.S. *þanan*.
ther, adv., there, 106, 222. A.S. *þær*.
theraboute, adv., thereabout, 222. A.S. *þær-abūtan*.
therfore, adv., conj., therefore, 121, 149, 476. A.S. *þær-foran*.
therof, adv., thereof, 18, 413, 425. A.S. *þær-of*.
theyr, pron., their, 55, 111, 141, 188, 193, 256, 497. A.S. *þāra*.
thi, pron., thy, 401. A.S. *þīn*.
thider, **thyder**, adv., thither, 134, 136. A.S. *þider*.

tho, adv., then, 406, 451. A.S. *þā*.
threde, n., pl.-s, thread, 207. A.S. *þræd*.
throughe, prep., through, 151. A.S. *þurh*.
thyng, **thinge**, n., thing, 26, 150, 380, 409, 411. A.S. *þing*.
thynke, **thinke**, v., think, 299, 145. A.S. *þencan*; *þyncan*.
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to, adv., too, 187. A.S. *tō*.
tourne, v., turn, 199, 289, 327; pret. **turned**, **tourned**, 108, 262. A.S. *turnian*.
towarde, prep., toward, 234, 390. A.S. *tōweard*.
towne, n., town, 215; pl., **townes**, **towenes**, 28, 37. A.S. *tūn*.
towre, n., pl.-s, tower, 28, 37. O.F. *tur*.
traine, n., situation, 325. O.F. *train*.
traitour, n., traitor, 356. O.F. *traitor*.
trauayle, n., travail, labor, toil, 238. O.F. *travaille*.
tre, n., tree, 8. A.S. *trēow*.
treatyse, n., treatise, 504. F. *traité*.
trechery, n., treachery, 40. O.F. *trecherie*.
treson, n., treason, 297. O.F. *traison*.
trewe, adj., true, 425. A.S. *trēowe*.
trone, n., throne, 501. F. *trône*.
trothe, n., truth, 409. A.S. *trēowð*.
trumpette, n., pl.-s, trumpet, 345. F. *trompette*.
turtyll, n., turtle-dove, 8. A.S. *turtile*.
twayne, adj., twain, 190, 193. A.S. *twēgen*.
tyde, n., tide, time, hour, 94. A.S. *tid*.
tyll, **tyl**, conj., till, 34, 52, 56, 132. O.N. *til*.

U

understande, v., p. p., understand, 125. A.S. *understandan*.
undertake, v., p. p., undertake, 278. A.S. *undertacan*.
unfolde, v., unfold, 205. A.S. *unfealdan*.

unlauffull, adj., unlawful, 120.
unto, conj., until, 319. Cf. O.L.G. *untō*.

V

vertue, n., virtue, 10, 272. A.F. *vertu*.
vyce, **vyse**, n. vice, 47, 51. A.F. *vyce*.
vylyanye, n., villainy, wrong, 223, 307. O.F. *vilainie*.

W

walkinge, v., pr. part. **walke**, walk, 117. A.S. *wealcān*.
wan, v., pret. **winne**, win, 219. A.S. *winnan*.
wante, v., want, 436. O.N. *vanta*.
ware, adj., aware, conscious, 263, 471. A.S. *wær*.
warre, n., war, 334. O.F. *werre*.
wele, adj., well, 437. A.S. *wel*.
well, n., weal, 239. A.S. *weal*.
welthe, n., wealth, 104. A.S. *wela*, M.H.G., M. Du., *welde*.
wente, v., pret. **wende**, go, wend, 115, 331, 450. A.S. *wendan*.
were, v., wear, 179. A.S. *werian*.
wete, **wote**, v., know, 243, 230, 231, 454; pret. **wyst**, 67, 423. A.S. *witan*.
whan, adv., when, 35, 68, 78, 109, 125, 143, 194, 212, 221, 231, 242, 329, 383, 404, 427, 437, 445. A.S. *hwanne*.
whereuer, **where-euer**, adv., wherever, 311, 317. A.S. *hwær-æfre*.
wherof, adv., whereof, 38, 432. A.S. *hwær-of*.
whome, pron., whom, 41, 113. A.S. *hwām*.
whyche, **whiche**, pron., which, 52, 114, 200, 208, 223, 503, 270. A.S. *hwilc*.
wight, adj., active, valiant, 353. O.N. *vigr*.
wo, n., woe, 54, 60, 74, 108, 188, 239, 324, 432, 446, 449, 464, 476, 479. A.S. *wā*.
worde, n., word, 162; pl.-s, 126, 144. A.S. *word*.
wounde, n., wound, 249, 367, 377; pl.-s, 275, 371, 374. A.S. *wund*.

wounde, v., wound, 62. A.S. wundian.
wrappe, v., wrap, 382.

wryte, v., write, 185. A.S. writan.

wyde, adj., wide, 242, 275. A.S. wide.

wyfe, n., wife, 160. A.S. wif.

wyl, wil, wyll, v., will, 150, 158, 202,
203, 280, 494; pret., wolde, wold, 19,

134, 351, 424, 472, 310. A.S. willan.

wyndowe, n., window, 65. O.N. vin-
dauga.

wyse, adj., wise, 12, 49. A.S. wis.

wyse, n., wise, way, manner, 420. A.S.
wise.

wyth, prep., with, 21, 122, 164, 196, 206,
210, 241, 249, 257, 290, 449, 497.

A.S. wið.

wythouten. withouten, prep., without,
51, 460. A.S. wiðutan.

Y

yelde, v., pret.-d, yield, 389, 497. A.S.
gildan.

yelowe, adj., yellow, 178, 212, 382, 440.
A.S. geolu.

yonge, adj., young, 9, 136. A.S. geong.

yf, conj., if, 84, 121, 169. A.S. gif.

VOL. IV, No. 2-3

JANUARY-APRIL, 1923

I

Smith College Studies in Modern Languages

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LES "FASTNACHTSPIELE" DE HANS SACHS

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NORTHAMPTON, MASS.
SMITH COLLEGE

PARIS
LIBRAIRIE E. CHAMPION

Published Quarterly by the
Departments of Modern Languages of Smith College

LES
«FASTNACHTSPIELE»

DE
HANS SACHS

THÈSE POUR LE DOCTORAT D'UNIVERSITÉ
PRÉSENTÉE A LA FACULTÉ DES LETTRES DE
L'UNIVERSITÉ DE PARIS

PAR
HÉLÈNE CATTANÈS



IMPRIMERIE STRASBOURGEOISE
STRASBOURG
15. Rue des Juifs, 15

14

ERRATA

IV^a

- Préface 1ère page l. 3. lire: nurembergeois.
- p. 3. l. 8. lire: tant d'argent!
- p. 13. l. 31. lire: le tête à tête.
- p. 32. l. 19. lire: florissant.
- p. 43. l. 27. lire: "glimpflich ohn all unzucht."
- p. 94. l. 17. lire: poète.
- p. 153. l. 28. lire: immense lecture.
- p. 158. l. 21. lire: Le Fastnachtspiel de Rosenplüt est monotone, sec, ennuyeux et nous laisse froids.

Préface

Depuis l'excellent ouvrage de mon cher maître, M. Charles Schweitzer sur Hans Sachs¹, beaucoup d'autres ont étudié la vie du grand poète nurembourgeois et son œuvre. Il semble presque hardi et présomptueux de revenir encore sur cette question dans l'espoir d'y ajouter quelque chose de nouveau. Aussi bien n'essayerons-nous pas de traiter des points qui ont été déjà suffisamment étudiés. Nous bornerons notre étude au théâtre comique populaire, aux *Fastnachtspiele* qui, jusqu'ici, n'ont pas été considérés dans leur ensemble.

Quoi qu'ils se rattachent à l'œuvre entière par mille liens d'analogie qui marquent comme la filiation de leur origine, nous avons cru bon de les en détacher; car ces pièces, par leur caractère, méritent une étude spéciale. Il est vrai que M. Schweitzer avait consacré un chapitre aux *Fastnachtspiele* dans son étude sur Hans Sachs et que beaucoup d'autres travaux de détail concernant une pièce en particulier ou toutes les pièces à un point de vue spécial avaient paru depuis; personne pourtant n'a encore étudié les *Fastnachtspiele* dans leur ensemble. Aussi avons-nous cru intéressant de rassembler toutes ces données en les complétant, en y ajoutant le fruit de nos recherches personnelles, afin de faire connaître Hans Sachs, le poète comique, qui est de beaucoup supérieur, selon nous, au maître-chanteur. Car les *Fastnachtspiele* sont une partie très importante, peut-être la plus vivante et la plus caractéristique de son œuvre.

De plus, ces *Fastnachtspiele* sont importants parce qu'ils sont le premier échelon du théâtre comique en Allemagne, les premiers balbutiements d'un art qui, dans les pays où il trouva un terrain favorable, a fait depuis des pas de géant.

¹ *Etude sur la vie et les œuvres de Hans Sachs*, Paris 1887.

Préface

Si l'on se rappelle que notre grand Molière, le maître de la scène comique, fut d'abord et avant tout auteur de farces; si l'on songe à ses premiers essais en province, *Le Médecin volant*, *La Jalousie du Barbouillé*, plus tard encore *Les Fourberies de Scapin*, prélude de ses grandes conceptions futures, les *Femmes savantes*, *L'Avare* et le *Misanthrope*, on s'aperçoit qu'il ne faut pas mépriser en littérature des tâtonnements qui, malgré leur imperfection, préparent peut-être une belle moisson pour l'avenir.

Cette étude des *Fastnachtspiele* de Hans Sachs nous a donc semblé importante, non seulement en elle-même, mais comme chapitre d'une étude plus vaste sur le théâtre comique, en Allemagne.

Quand, à la fin de ce travail, nous croirons pouvoir affirmer que dès la Renaissance l'Allemagne a cherché et trouvé avec Hans Sachs la bonne voie dans l'art comique, partout naissant; que ces premiers pas, s'affranchissant bien vite de leur timidité première, faisaient prévoir une belle carrière au théâtre comique allemand, nous ne pourrions nous empêcher de demander pourquoi la scène d'outre Rhin ne continua pas dans cette voie; pourquoi, loin de trouver son Molière, elle sembla ensuite tomber pour longtemps en décadence. Car le théâtre allemand est pauvre en bonnes comédies, tandis qu'elles fleurissent à foison dans les autres pays. Ce serait là une question intéressante à étudier. Elle ne rentre pas dans le cadre de cette étude; qu'on nous excuse de l'avoir seulement posée ici.

Puisque Hans Sachs incarne la farce en Allemagne, nous pouvons le considérer comme le représentant du théâtre comique allemand de la Renaissance.

Étudier Hans Sachs, c'est donc étudier le théâtre comique en Allemagne à cette époque, sujet très intéressant pour la littérature comparée; car nous ne doutons pas qu'il n'y ait beaucoup à tirer d'un rapprochement des divers théâtres à leur début en France, en Angleterre, en Italie, en Allemagne, en Espagne, à une époque où ces différents

pays ne peuvent guère s'influencer réciproquement, mais où bien des traits révèlent pourtant une inspiration semblable.

Les *Fastnachtspiele* de Hans Sachs ont, de plus, un intérêt historique qui n'est pas moins grand; car ils offrent une excellente étude de mœurs. L'historien peut y puiser maints détails, et à travers les faits et gestes de ces Nurembergeois du XVI^e siècle, c'est l'âme de la Réforme et de la Renaissance qui se découvre. Car les *Fastnachtspiele* sont un écho de cette époque si troublée et si troublante, dont la richesse de vie intérieure est si difficile à pénétrer. C'est la Réforme seule qui se reflète dans les Dialogues; c'est la Renaissance de l'Antiquité grecque et latine qui a donné naissance aux comédies et aux tragédies. Les *Fastnachtspiele*, écho fidèle de la vie journalière, les reflètent toutes deux, en même temps qu'ils sont un aboutissement de la tradition populaire.

Ajoutons enfin que, plus que dans toute autre, c'est dans cette partie de l'œuvre de Hans Sachs que nous avons le mieux compris et senti la diversité, la richesse de l'esprit de l'homme et du poète, et que nous avons le mieux pénétré l'âme de celui qui, sans abandonner son métier de savetier, sut être grand par le cœur et l'esprit.

* * *

Qu'il nous soit permis d'adresser ici nos remerciements affectueux à M. Charles Schweitzer, professeur honoraire de l'Université, qui, après avoir été longtemps notre maître dévoué et infatigable, nous aida souvent de ses encouragements et de ses précieux conseils au cours de ce travail, et d'exprimer notre profonde gratitude à M. Charles Andler, professeur à la faculté des Lettres de Paris, pour toutes ses suggestions et ses indulgentes critiques.

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CHAPITRE I^{er}

Catégories de *Fastnachtspiele*

Grande diversité des *Fastnachtspiele* : morceaux comiques, sérieux, tragiques. — Comédies divisées en actes. — Comment expliquer ce mélange? — Classement par genres: Moralités (allégorie, but moral). — *Kampfgespräche*. — Pièces à défilé. — Scènes de la vie quotidienne. — Episodes dramatisés.

Hans Sachs a donné lui-même dans son *Generalregister*, qui appartient aujourd'hui au Ratsarchiv de Zwickau, la liste de toutes ses œuvres poétiques, contenues jusque-là dans 34 volumes in-folio. Il le fait, dit-il, « *auf das man nach meinem dot auch sech, das ich nicht müessig gangen sey, weil meine püecher in manche hant möchten zer-strewt und verzogen werden* ».

Dans ce registre, nous trouvons au feuillet 78¹ la liste des *Fastnachtspiele*, classés chronologiquement et avec soin par le poète lui-même. Elle comprend 85 pièces, dont quatre n'ont pu être retrouvées jusqu'ici. Edmund Goetze, dont les travaux sur Hans Sachs font autorité, s'est attaché fidèlement à cette liste pour publier l'édition complète des *Fastnachtspiele*, qui a paru en sept volumes de 1880 à 1887. C'est sur les pièces de cette collection que porte ce travail; par conséquent, sur les pièces que Hans Sachs lui-même a considérées comme des farces de Carnaval.

Toutes ces farces forment un ensemble très divers. Nous y trouvons des pièces toutes comiques, dont le seul but est évidemment de divertir, et où les folies humaines dansent la sarabande effrénée des jours de Carnaval. Tels sont: *Der gestolen Pachen*¹, *Der rosdieb zu Fünssing mit den dollen diebischen pawern*² *Der Krämerskorb*³, où Nuremberg lâche la bride à toute sa folle gaîté.

¹ *Fastn.* 41.

² *Fastn.* 59.

³ *Fastn.* 66.

D'autres revêtent un caractère plus sage. Une part y est laissée au bon sens, et l'auteur s'efforce, tout en amusant, de donner quelque leçon de morale pratique. Ce sont: *Der schwanger Pauer*¹, *Der Pauer mit dem Kuedieb*², *Der unersetzlich Geitzhunger*³, *Das heiss Eysen*⁴ et une foule d'autres. Quelquefois la tendance morale est si nette que le comique est en grande partie effacé par l'enseignement, comme dans: *Der kampf fraw Armuet mit fraw Glueck*⁵ ou *Der laster Artzney*⁶.

Quelques-unes touchent une corde plus grave encore: toute gaité a disparu pour faire place à des pensées sérieuses. Ce sont des discussions philosophiques sur la question de savoir si un sage doit ou non prendre femme⁷, ou bien c'est Diogène qui essaye de démontrer au grand Alexandre que le bonheur du sage est bien supérieur à celui du puissant⁸. C'est la pièce *Von der Eygenschafft der Lieb*⁹, où l'auteur dresse un véritable martyrologe des personnages célèbres de l'Antiquité ou de la légende qui furent victimes de l'Amour. Le même ton sérieux domine dans d'autres pièces où Hans Sachs met à la scène quelque sujet antique, bien que ces sujets sans souplesse conviennent peu à une véritable farce.

Peut-on considérer ces pièces comme des *Fastnachtspiele*? Pourquoi non? Il semble qu'elles appartiennent autant à cette sorte de divertissements que les cortèges historiques d'une gravité presque solennelle qui, encore de nos jours, traversent les villes à l'époque du Carnaval.

Nous trouvons même une pièce tout à fait tragique et qui, unique dans cette série, mérite que nous nous y attardions un peu¹⁰. Le sujet se retrouve dans toutes les littératures.

¹ *Fastn.* 16.

² *Fastn.* 25.

³ *Fastn.* 32.

⁴ *Fastn.* 38.

⁵ *Fastn.* 68.

⁶ *Fastn.* 17.

⁷ *Fastn.* 71.

⁸ *Fastn.* 44.

⁹ *Fastn.* 1.

¹⁰ *Fastn.* 70: *der dot im Stock*.

Un pauvre ermite, après avoir accompli ses devoirs journaliers envers le Seigneur, vient se reposer dans un coin de bois, en écoutant chanter les oiseaux, créatures de Dieu. Au moment de s'asseoir sur une souche d'arbre, il y découvre un trésor. Mais ce trésor, c'est la mort: car la richesse n'apporte souvent que malheur. Prudemment il s'éloigne. Pourtant, combien de pauvres gens il pourrait soulager avec tant d'argent. Cette pieuse pensée le ramène. Mais non, ce bien ne lui appartient pas, il n'y touchera pas; et il disparaît dans la forêt. Arrivent trois brigands. Ils aperçoivent l'ermite et bien vite prennent la décision de le tuer pour le dévaliser. Le brave solitaire les avertit qu'un danger les menace: dans le tronc, il a vu la mort. Mais il paie cher ses conseils.

Le trésor découvert, nos hommes dépêchent l'un d'eux à la ville voisine pour y acheter pain et vin. Tout à coup, la peur saisit les deux autres. Ne va-t-il pas nous dénoncer? se demandent-ils. Il en sera bien capable quelque jour; le mieux est de se débarrasser de lui dès son retour. Et ainsi il n'y aura que deux parts à faire. Le malheureux est bien vite expédié dans l'autre monde. Mais le rusé compère avait empoisonné pain et vin pour garder à lui seul le trésor. Tous deux expient leur crime par une mort affreuse.

Tel est le sujet dont Hans Sachs a fait une farce. C'est une véritable tragédie qui se déroule devant nous, tragédie très bien menée d'ailleurs, et à beaucoup d'égards une des meilleures de notre poète.

Si le ton des pièces est des plus variés, on peut remarquer aussi une certaine diversité dans l'exécution. La plupart des *Fastnachtspiele*, courts et rapides, se déroulent dans les limites d'un acte unique. Quelques-uns cependant sont partagés en actes: *Neidhart mit dem feyhel*¹ a trois actes; *die jüng witfraw Francisca*² de même; *Esopüs, der fabeldichter*³

¹ *Fastn.* 75.

² *Fastn.* 84.

³ *Fastn.* 85.

en a cinq. Dans l'histoire de Neidhart, cette division s'explique peut-être: il y a au fond plusieurs sujets qui se tiennent par une unité superficielle plutôt qu'intérieure, l'unité des personnages surtout. Le premier acte représente l'histoire de la violette, le second la vengeance de Neidhart et le troisième un véritable sujet de farce: le duc et la femme de Neidhart. Il y a donc là trois actions que Hans Sachs s'efforce de fondre en un tout. *Franziska* et *Esope* sont plutôt des comédies. Le poète lui-même d'ailleurs donne à l'une le nom de comédie, à l'autre le nom de *Spiel*.

Si l'on remarque que ces pièces portent les numéros 75, 84 et 85 et datent respectivement de février 1557, octobre et novembre 1560, on verra qu'elles appartiennent à la dernière période de la carrière de Hans Sachs et que peut-être l'influence de la comédie antique, cultivée tous les jours avec plus de dévotion autour du poète, a pu l'entraîner à établir ici une division en actes. Peut-être avons-nous affaire simplement à des comédies que Hans Sachs a ensuite rattachées aux *Fastnachtspiele*. En tout cas, ce sont là quelques véritables comédies égarées parmi les farces de Carnaval.

Farces de tout genre, comédies, tragédies, voilà donc ce que Hans Sachs a réuni dans ce recueil sous le nom de *Fastnachtspiele*. Comment expliquer ce mélange? C'est que Hans Sachs ne fait guère de différence entre une tragédie et une comédie, pas plus qu'entre *Fastnachtspiel*, *Spiel* et *Kampfgespräch*. Il dit bien dans une pièce¹:

(er) liess haltn ein trawrige Tragedij

Darauff ein fröliche Comedij,

mais il a souvent des hésitations:

auch macht ich ein teutsche Komedi,

Doch nicht ungleich einer Tragedi, ou bien:

Ein Comedi, das man auch nennt wohl ein Tragedi.

Ailleurs, il appelle un de ses drames: *Ein Komedia oder Kampfgespräch*², ce qui prouve qu'il ne voit pas de différences

¹ *Fastn.* 50: *Der verdorben Edelmann mit dem weichen beht...* v. 212 sq.

² *Ein Komedia oder Kampfgespräch zwischen Jupiter und Juno* (1534).

entre ces deux genres. Veut-il classer ses drames, il distingue 1° des tragédies, 2° des comédies, 3° des *Spiele*. Une autre fois il les rangera en 1° *geistliche Spiele*, 2° *weltliche Spiele*, 3° *Fastnachtspiele mit Schwänken*. Cette distinction des *geistliche Spiele* et des *weltliche Spiele* montre bien que Hans Sachs ne considère pas la nature intime de l'action dramatique. Ce qui décidera du titre de ses pièces, ce sera évidemment le dénouement, l'impression finale. C'est ce que nous dit d'ailleurs le poète lui-même dans le drame: *Der Fürst von Orlenz mit seiner Amalei*, qu'il nous donne comme une « gentille comédie, qui pourrait se comparer à une tragédie, tant elle est triste jusqu'à la fin, où elle prend enfin une tournure heureuse »¹.

Qu'est-ce qui décidera du titre de *Fastnachtspiele*? Non pas le ton final ou général, que nous avons vu si divers, mais avant tout la période à laquelle ou pour laquelle ces pièces ont été écrites. Ainsi *Neidhart* s'appelle *Fastnachtspiel*, parce qu'elle fut jouée au Carnaval, comme le disent les premiers vers: . . . « *die weil es icz ist fasnacht zeit* »². Il ne faut donc pas s'étonner de trouver rassemblées des pièces de genres si variés; car toutes peuvent évidemment se jouer pendant le Carnaval, surtout à cette époque avide de spectacles.

Pour classer des drames aussi divers, le mieux serait sans doute de suivre l'ordre chronologique et d'essayer d'en dégager une évolution dans la carrière dramatique de notre poète. Mais il faut renoncer à une telle classification; car chez Hans Sachs il n'y a pas de progrès; du moins, en ce qui concerne le choix des sujets. Pourtant dans l'arrangement scénique et dans l'exécution même des moindres détails, on ne peut nier un progrès constant jusqu'aux dernières pièces. Il y a progrès dans la forme, il n'y en a aucun quant au fond.

¹ « *Ein artlich comedi
die sich vergleicht einer tragedi
Gar traurig hin bis zv dem endt
Da es sich erst zv freuden wendt.* »

Ed. Nürnberg IV, 2, 15.

² *Fastn.* 75, v. 4.

Il suffira, pour s'en rendre compte, de lire le dernier de tous les Fastnachtspiele: *Esope* (F. 85). Hans Sachs met à la scène un épisode de la vie d'Esope, épisode qui ne présente aucune action dramatique, et, partant, bien peu capable d'éveiller l'intérêt au théâtre. Hans Sachs ne distingue pas plus clairement à la fin de sa carrière qu'au début quels sujets sont capables d'une action dramatique. Nous le voyons encore en septembre 1555 et en décembre 1557¹ mettre à la scène des *Kampfgespräche*, une des formes les plus élémentaires, une des moins dramatiques.

C'est donc par genres que nous essayerons de classer les différentes farces de notre poète, à savoir: moralités, débats, pièces à défilé, scènes de la vie quotidienne, épisodes dramatisés.

Notons qu'avant tout Hans Sachs incarne son époque. Par le caractère, par la pensée comme par sa vie, il appartient à une époque de transition entre le Moyen âge et les temps modernes. Bien des traits le rattachent au crépuscule d'hier, bien d'autres à l'aube qui commence à luire. Son œuvre dramatique révèle nettement cette période de transition. Par ses moralités, il rappelle le xv^e siècle. Quelle place prennent dans son œuvre les allégories, les *Kampfgespräche*, ce genre favori du Moyen âge! Beaucoup de ses pièces ne sont que des fabliaux mis à la scène ou des récits d'aventures de la période précédente. Mais ces matériaux se transforment peu à peu sous la plume de Hans Sachs, et, habillés de l'esprit nouveau, modelés par notre poète, ils prennent une apparence moderne. De plus, par des scènes empruntées à la vie journalière et par des épisodes dramatisés, il annonce déjà la comédie future.

Quelques pièces appelées « farces » par notre poète sont de véritables moralités. Elles rappellent en tout point les nombreuses moralités françaises de la Basoche au xv^e siècle, telles que la *Condamnation de Banquet* et celles qui ont fleuri en si grand nombre en Angleterre vers la même époque: *Everyman*, *Castle of Perseverance*, etc.

¹ *Fastn.* 71 et 78.

La plus caractéristique de ces moralités est la farce intitulée *Das Narrenschneiden*¹. Un charlatan (c'est là un des personnages favoris de la farce au Moyen âge) est en quête de pratiques et vante son art et ses connaissances. Un malade, un vrai Falstaff se soutenant à peine sur deux béquilles, se présente. Il souffre de l'estomac, et le docteur découvre bientôt la cause du mal: *Der Mensch steckt aller voller Narrn*. Il faut lui extraire ces manies sans plus tarder. L'opération commence: c'est d'abord, sous forme d'un diabolin, l'Orgueil qui est mis à jour; puis, aux cris redoublés du patient, on lui enlève successivement Avarice, Envie, Impudicité, Intempérance, Colère, Paresse, toutes d'une laideur repoussante, qui le harcelaient et tenaillaient à qui mieux mieux. Le malade ne souffre plus; cependant l'embonpoint qui persiste suscite un examen plus attentif: le docteur découvre alors le nid de tous ces démons: « *inn dir steckt noch das Narren nest* », où grouillent encore toute une foule de vices: Ingratitude, Jalousie, Curiosité, Flatterie... aucun n'est oublié, jusqu'à la Magie qui y trouve sa place. Ne faisons pas comme ce malheureux. Pour éviter bien des tourments, gardons-nous de laisser entrer et de nourrir en nous de tels parasites. Laissons ses droits à la Raison, elle saura nous garder de tout mal.

Dans une autre pièce, Hans Sachs nous montre la Vérité, cherchant en vain un asile parmi les hommes². Repoussée par tous, citadins et villageois, riches et pauvres, seigneurs et vilains, juges et prêtres même, elle croit un moment avoir trouvé un gîte pour la nuit chez de simples paysans. Mais son espoir est bientôt déçu; la simplicité non plus n'aime pas dire ni entendre la Vérité, et ils la chassent sans pitié. Désespérée, il ne lui reste plus qu'à se cacher au fond d'un désert, jusqu'à ce qu'une ère meilleure vienne sur terre, où la Vérité pourra enfin trouver place. « *Das geb Gott baldt! das wünscht Hans Sachs...* »

Ailleurs³ c'est Pauvreté et Fortune qui se livrent un combat pour décider à qui des deux appartiendra désor-

¹ *Fastn.* 11.

² *Fastn.* 24.

³ *Fastn.* 68.

mais l'empire du monde. La Fortune, vaincue, doit abandonner les mauvais dons qu'elle répand chez les hommes: Lascivité, Irascibilité, Paresse, Orgueil, Cupidité, et une foule d'autres qui causent le malheur humain. Attachés à un pieu, ils sont bienfôt détachés par les hommes qui viennent eux-mêmes, malgré les avertissements de dame Fortune, mettre en liberté le malheur qui fondra sur eux. Ils s'aperçoivent bientôt, mais trop tard, de leur sottise. Soyons sages et gardons-nous d'une telle folie, si nous voulons être heureux ici-bas.

Ou bien c'est le *Fürwitz*¹ qui essaye d'entraîner un jeune adolescent au mal, tandis que le fidèle Eckhart, qui personnifie la vertu, la voix de la conscience, essaie de le ramener dans le droit chemin.

Dans toutes ces pièces, les personnages appartiennent à la fiction, ce qui est un des caractères de la moralité. Le fidèle Eckhart, incarnation de la vertu, se retrouve plusieurs fois; nous avons vu Frau Armut et Frau Glück, ainsi que Frau Wahrheit. N'est-ce pas enfin une longue allégorie que la farce du *Narrenscheiden*, où tous les vices prennent la forme de diabolins repoussants qui torturent celui qu'ils possèdent? Ce ne sont pas des personnages véritables qui agissent dans toutes ces pièces, mais plutôt des idées ou des passions ayant pris forme humaine; mannequins parfois bien caractérisés, mais manquant de vie et d'intérêt dramatique. Ce sont des personnages allégoriques ou du moins symboliques. Dans ces drames encore très primitifs se révèle la naïveté en même temps que l'imperfection d'un art encore dans l'enfance.

Par le but aussi ces pièces rappellent bien celles du Moyen âge: on y voit le Vice en conflit avec la Vertu et vaincu par elle; partout une tendance moralisatrice très nette. On peut donc les considérer comme des survivances des moralités.

Il y a une autre catégorie de pièces où Hans Sachs est encore très près du Moyen âge. Ce sont les *Kampfgespräche*,

¹ *Fastn.* 8.

sorte de controverses, de débats dialogués, sans véritable action dramatique à moins qu'on ne nomme ainsi la dispute qui s'élève entre les personnages. Ces sortes de drames étaient très cultivés au xv^e siècle, et quelques-uns de Hans Folz sont parvenus jusqu'à nous. Ici, Solon et Thalès plaident, l'un pour, l'autre contre le mariage¹. Ailleurs la discussion prend le caractère d'une dispute; le Galant, le Joueur et l'Ivrogne, trois frères, se disputent un héritage². Plus loin l'Avare et le Prodigue veulent chacun montrer à leur père, qu'il saurait mieux que l'autre tirer profit des biens légués³. Une œuvre de jeunesse *Von der Eygenschafft der Lieb*⁴, plus tard *La Pauvreté et Pluton*⁵, *La Plainte contre l'usure*⁶ sont encore des discussions fades et sans vie. L'une cependant offre un intérêt particulier⁷; car c'est un essai de discussion politique, un débat sur la valeur des trois États: bourgeois, paysan et noble plaident chacun pour sa classe. Le paysan arrive à convaincre ses deux adversaires de la supériorité de sa vie, plus conforme à la nature, bien qu'elle ne soit pas toujours irréprochable; tandis que dans la plupart des autres pièces, c'est un juge, le père ou l'aubergiste qui prononcent le jugement définitif à la fin du débat.

Il est curieux que dans toutes les pièces de cette catégorie, Hans Sachs évite autant que possible de rendre un jugement. Si ce sont des malheureux ou des vices qui sont en présence, il leur donne également tort à chacun (cf.: *Fastn.* 5, 7, 9, 13, 78); ailleurs il essaye de concilier deux opinions différentes (cf. *Fastn.* 1, 71). Même dans la farce n° 15, où le paysan semble l'emporter, au fond Hans Sachs reconnaît ce qu'il y a de bon et de mauvais dans chaque état. Deux fois seulement nous voyons que le mal l'emporte sur le bien (*Fastn.* 6, 8); une fois, le bien, la sagesse sur la puissance tyrannique (*Fastn.* 44).

¹ *Fastn.* 71.

² *Fastn.* 5.

³ *Fastn.* 7.

⁴ *Fastn.* 1.

⁵ *Fastn.* 3 cf. plus loin ch. 8.

⁶ *Fastn.* 78.

⁷ *Fastn.* 75.

On peut rattacher aussi à cette série les *Klagreden* que Hans Sachs aime particulièrement et dont la pièce de *Fraw Wahrheit* nous donne une idée¹. C'est encore là une forme de drame bien imparfaite. La vie y est partout à peu près nulle, et l'intérêt généralement bien maigre.

Il y a déjà progrès dans les pièces à défilé, ou revues, à la mode depuis la fin du Moyen âge, et qui jouissent encore de la faveur de Hans Sachs au début de sa carrière dramatique. La première pièce de ce genre, sans doute la plus ancienne pièce de Hans Sachs (il la fit dès son retour à Nuremberg en 1517), révèle la maladresse d'un débutant. C'est *Das Hoffgesindt Veneris*². A tour de rôle un chevalier, un docteur, un bourgeois, un paysan, un guerrier, un joueur, un buveur, une femme, une jeune fille défilent devant Vénus, qu'ils bravent fièrement, malgré les conseils du fidèle Eckhart. Tous frappés du trait fatal doivent bientôt s'avouer vaincus et sont faits prisonniers. Ce sont, ailleurs, des personnages qui défilent l'un derrière l'autre et donnent libre cours à leurs jérémiades sur leur propre sort³; ou un *Arztspiel* sous forme de revue⁴.

Dans ces morceaux le mouvement dramatique s'accroît déjà. On remarque même d'une pièce à l'autre un progrès réel. La première, la *Cour de Vénus* n'est qu'une revue, où les personnages sont dès le début sur la scène et se détachent un à un du groupe pour venir dire leur rôle. Peu à peu, la revue se transforme en défilé: les personnages entrent en scène, chacun à son tour. Un même motif les amène, qui donne une certaine unité à la pièce. La vie extérieure commence à se dérouler sur la scène. Ce ne sont pas encore des personnages nettement caractérisés, avec des sentiments distincts et des passions qui intéressent. Ce sont plutôt des mannequins qui s'avancent tour à tour pour débiter leur rôle. Mais ils incarnent déjà un état, ils ont un rôle défini. L'intérêt croît peu à peu.

¹ *Fastn.* 24.

² *Fastn.* 2.

³ *Fastn.* 13 et 9.

⁴ *Fastn.* 17.

On discerne un nouveau progrès dans les scènes empruntées à la vie journalière de la ville, de la campagne, scènes de ménage, scènes de marché. Ici Hans Sachs se détache du passé et de l'exemple de ses devanciers pour se frayer un chemin propre. Une des farces les plus amusantes est la pièce intitulée *Der kremer korb*¹, où l'action progressive éveille déjà quelque intérêt dramatique.

Un marchand forain se dispute dans la rue avec sa femme; il veut qu'elle porte le panier de marchandises, elle s'y refuse; à bout d'arguments, ils en viennent aux mains. Parmi les badauds, témoins de la scène, se trouve un jeune domestique Heinz, qui, en rentrant, raconte la querelle à ses maîtres; la maîtresse prend fait et cause pour la femme, son mari pour l'homme. Ils s'animent bientôt, et une nouvelle bataille s'engage. La cuisinière, étonnée de tout ce vacarme, demande des détails à Heinz, qui lui raconte la dispute. Elle prend parti pour son sexe, Heinz soutient le sien. Les gros mots pleuvent, puis les coups. Heinz, tout meurtri par les coups de cuillère à pot, jure, mais un peu tard, que jamais plus on ne le reprendra à s'occuper des affaires du voisin.

Une autre fois, Hans Sachs nous transporte à la campagne². Le plus beau coq de la basse-cour s'est envolé chez le voisin; celui-ci prétend qu'il ne l'a pas vu. Les menaces pleuvent de part et d'autre. Avertie par un diseur de bonne aventure, la femme découvre sur le fumier du voisin les plumes de son coq. Une querelle s'élève. Les femmes surtout, plus acharnées, s'abandonnent à leur fureur. Elles se jettent à la face tous leurs péchés, mignons et capitaux. Malgré les efforts de leur mari, une bataille en règle s'engage bientôt. Les poings entrent en danse. Séparées enfin, elles continuent à s'injurier, tandis que les hommes, réconciliés, vont oublier leurs griefs au cabaret voisin.

Suivons maintenant notre poète dans un de ces intérieurs des environs de Nuremberg, où on se réunit le soir

¹ *Fastn.* 66.

² *Fastn.* 21.

à la veillée¹. Voici Gred qui entre avec son fuseau, bientôt suivie de son tendre ami Künzel. Les compliments du pauvre garçon sont mal reçus: jalouse, elle ne lui répond que par des injures. Mais Kunz est de taille à lui tenir tête et ne s'en prive pas. Belle façon de se faire la cour dans ce monde de valets et de vachères! La paysanne entre sur ces entre-faites, suivie de près par son mari, qui lui reproche de ne pas rester chez elle. Une aimable dispute commence, bientôt interrompue par un tzigane, qui va dire la bonne aventure à la société: passé, avenir, il dévoile tout. Et en effet, son art infaillible nous révèle de jolis caractères, de bien belles mœurs! Mari et femme se valent et accompagnent de leurs poings ses révélations aussi désagréables qu'inattendues. Quant aux jeunes gens, ils promettent de les dépasser encore, tant leur âme est déjà pervertie. Tableau peu flatteur, vraiment!

Ailleurs Hans Sachs nous fait assister à une des nombreuses réjouissances du Carnaval². Ce sera ce soir un concours de nez. Les paysans que dame Nature a particulièrement privilégiés sur ce point, sont invités à se présenter et arrivent en foule. Chacun se croit en droit de prétendre à un prix. Le choix des récompenses: mouchoir, braie et couronne³, n'est pas moins comique que la description satisfaite, et d'un grotesque toujours nouveau, que fait chacun de son appendice nasal. Le mécontentement, inévitable dès que la décision du juge est connue, amène bientôt une bataille générale. Le bailli a peine à rétablir l'ordre en les invitant le dimanche suivant à un nouveau concours. Quel sera le roi?

Parfois, nous assistons à la vie d'enfer que fait à son époux trop faible son « *dragon domestique* », que nul ne peut apprivoiser⁴. Nous sommes témoins de la douceur relative avec laquelle elle traite d'ordinaire les domestiques⁵. Et

¹ *Fastn.* 10.

² *Fastn.* 20.

³ *F.* 20, v. 7: *ein nasen fueter, pruech und kranz.*

⁴ *Fastn.* 28.

⁵ *Fastn.* 4.

combien d'autres tableaux, pris sur le vif, au hasard de la vie de tous les jours! Ce sont des scènes très vivantes, amusantes souvent, qui offrent un réel intérêt dramatique, et où le poète révèle déjà une main de maître.

Mais où il donne toute sa valeur, où il surpasse ses prédécesseurs comme tout son siècle, c'est dans un genre de pièces très proche de la comédie proprement dite, dans les épisodes dramatisés. Ces pièces qui sont pour la plupart bien supérieures dramatiquement aux catégories précédentes, sont aussi les plus nombreuses. On n'en compte pas moins d'une cinquantaine sur les quatre-vingt-un *Fastnachtspiele* qui nous sont parvenus. Dans ce nombre, il y a un tel noyau de bonnes pièces qu'on ne sait lesquelles citer; on n'a que l'embarras du choix.

Le diable s'ennuyant en enfer a décidé de prendre femme¹. Il cherche une épouse à sa convenance: il la lui faudra âgée, car il n'est plus jeune, et un peu versée dans la magie noire; son choix tombe sur une vieille sorcière. On célèbre le mariage; le nouvel époux est aux anges. Mais son épouse se révèle acariâtre et méchante dès la fin de la noce; bientôt, n'y pouvant plus tenir, il s'enfuit. Il entre au service d'un savant docteur; le démon s'emparera de l'âme des humains, pour qu'aussitôt on appelle le médecin à l'aide du possédé. Ainsi les clients seront assurés à nos rusés compères. Mais le pauvre diable, trompé par le médecin, refuse, pour se venger, d'abandonner le malade. Toutes les menaces sont sans effet. Seule la nouvelle que sa femme vient le rechercher donne des jambes au malheureux; qui préfère de beaucoup l'enfer aux douceurs de l'hymen.

Ailleurs² un écolier entre dans une ferme pour y demander l'aumône, mais il trouble la tête-à-tête de la fermière et du curé du village qui, en l'absence du mari, se disposent à faire bonne chère. On devine comment il est reçu: le curé le met à la porte avec force injures. Bientôt le mari rentre. Le curé n'a que le temps de se cacher dans le trou du poêle, tandis

¹ *Fastn.* 76.

² *Fastn.* 37.

que la femme va ouvrir la porte. Mais l'écolier éconduit ne tarde pas à revenir: il médite une vengeance. Afin de mériter un asile pour la nuit, il évoquera le diable devant le paysan. Les époux s'éloignent pendant que l'écolier prépare la scène; c'est le curé qui fera le diable, et il faudra bien qu'il s'y résigne, s'il ne veut pas être livré au mari. Sur l'injonction de l'écolier, le diable se présente, boiteux et bossu, noir de suie, affublé d'une peau de cheval, et, trop content de s'en tirer à si bon compte, exécute servilement les ordres du magicien. Il n'y reviendra certes pas de sitôt.

Le lendemain, l'écolier s'en ira plus loin, duper une paysanne à l'air stupide, qui le croit de retour du Paradis¹. Il accepte, avec l'empressement qu'on devine, de porter à son mari, mort il y a peu de temps, des vêtements et quelque argent, pour qu'il ne manque de rien. Le second mari, rentré peu après, rejoint bientôt notre homme et lui demande s'il n'a pas vu sur la route celui qu'il cherche. Si fait, il a pris à travers champs, lui répond notre malin compère. Et le paysan, avec une naïveté qui n'a d'égale que celle de sa femme, lui demande de garder un moment son cheval, tandis qu'il court après le voleur. Il peut être tranquille, la bête sera bien gardée!

Une autre fois, c'est le malicieux Eulenspiegel² qui va persuader un paysan que le drap vert qu'il vient d'acheter à la foire est du plus beau bleu. Le paysan accepte un pari. Ils prennent pour juge le premier passant venu, puis un prêtre à l'air honnête. Mais tous deux, achetés par notre fourbe, lui donnent raison. Et le paysan doit se résigner à perdre son drap, bien que persuadé qu'il a affaire à trois filous.

Ailleurs notre espiègle se charge de rendre blanches comme lait les fourrures crasseuses de quelques paysannes trop confiantes³. Celles-ci s'aperçoivent trop tard qu'il ne reste plus dans la cuve que des peaux nues: tous

¹ *Fastn.* 22.

² *Fastn.* 77.

³ *Fastn.* 72.

les poils nagent à la surface. Mais déjà Eulenspiegel a pris la clé des champs. Il ira plus loin¹, renouveler l'exploit connu en France par les *Trois aveugles de Compiègne*. Partout il invente de nouveaux tours, partout il échappe à ses dupes.

Il faut avouer que tous ces paysans font preuve de trop de sottise. Certains villages ont un renom de simplicité légendaire. Tel celui de Fünsing, dont les habitants sont assez niais pour mettre en liberté un fripon de la plus belle espèce, en lui faisant promettre de revenir se faire pendre après la moisson².

La fourberie des gens d'Église vaut bien la sottise des paysans. Nous voici à l'époque de l'Inquisition³. Simon Wirt, un paysan naïf, a du bon vin, si bon, dit-il ingénument, qu'il égayerait même l'humeur du bon Dieu et de saint Jean. Quelqu'un le dénonce bien vite pour ce blasphème, dans l'espoir d'une récompense; et, convoqué devant l'Inquisiteur, il est bientôt convaincu de son hérésie. Pour expier sa faute, il fera pénitence dans un cachot du couvent. On lui laisse entendre qu'il y a des moyens de se racheter: trop simple, il ne comprend pas. Un jour, il confesse à l'Inquisiteur qu'une parole dans le sermon du matin l'a effrayé. « Ce que nous donnons ici-bas, a dit le prêtre, nous sera rendu au centuple dans l'autre monde. Oui, certes! » et l'Inquisiteur insiste, espérant que notre hérétique est sur la bonne voie. Il croit déjà tenir de beaux écus. « Mais j'ai vu que vous donniez chaque jour trois marmites de soupe aux pauvres, devant la porte du couvent; cela fait 1095 tous les ans, soit 109.500 que vous recevrez dans l'autre monde. Que ferez-vous de toute cette lavasse? Je crains que vous ne vous y noyiez, avec tout le couvent; vu surtout l'impossibilité de nager avec une soutane. Cela me fait pitié, rien que d'y songer! » L'Inquisiteur croit qu'on se moque de lui et se hâte, dans sa colère, de chasser du couvent cet imposteur, cet effronté qui vient le railler chez lui. Cette fois, c'est lui la dupe; car il en est pour ses frais.

¹ *Fastn.* 51.

² *Fastn.* 59. .

³ *Fastn.* 53.

Saint Pierre lui-même n'est pas à l'abri des railleries de notre poète. C'est lui¹ qui descend sur terre en permission de trois jours, et oubliant, dans les vapeurs de l'ivresse, toute réalité, se réveille après neuf jours d'absence, et retourne, un peu confus, encore un peu grisé, auprès de son maître qui l'attend. Car saint Pierre est une figure aimée de la légende et aussi de la satire, une figure de saint qui a gardé l'empreinte terrestre et n'a pas su s'arracher encore aux plaisirs matériels des humains. Figure bien faite pour tenter la bonhomie railleuse d'un enfant terrible comme Hans Sachs. Que de fois il inspire notre poète!

Mais il faut en rester là. On ne se laisserait pas de citer ainsi de nombreuses farces, qui trouveraient aujourd'hui encore une faveur enthousiaste auprès du public, pourtant rendu difficile par quatre siècles de théâtre.

Avec ces pièces, Hans Sachs est le maître incontesté de la scène comique au xvi^e siècle. Ce n'est pas son moindre mérite d'avoir, le premier, voulu et su représenter un événement, une action qui ait « *un commencement, un milieu et une fin* »². Il faut savoir lui en tenir compte. Il faut lui savoir gré aussi de la vérité et de la multiplicité des scènes qu'il déroule à nos yeux. Il touche à tous les mondes, traite des sujets ecclésiastiques aussi bien qu'historiques ou philosophiques, les emprunte cependant de préférence à la vie populaire, à la rue. La vie tout entière est de son ressort, et Goethe, qui le connaît si bien, a pu dire que le poète a mis à la scène:

..... « *alles Leben,
der Menschen wunderliches Weben,
Ihr Wirren, Suchen, Stossen und Treiben,
Schieben, Reißen, Drängen und Reiben . . .* »

¹ *Fastn.* 67.

² Nun dise spil dreyerley art werden dir die histori unnd geschicht, warvon ein iedes fürgenommen ist, auf das deutlichst an tag geben, mit *anfang, mittel* und *endt*, samb man die augenscheinlich im werck sech geschehen. »

CHAPITRE II

Le *Fastnachtspiel* et le *Mime*

La farce comique en Europe. — Origine du *Fastnachtspiel*. — Le *Schembart* de Nuremberg, son origine païenne. — Parallèle entre le *Fastnachtspiel* et le *mime*: ressemblances extérieures, dans les sujets, les personnages, la langue, le ton général, quelques détails. — Le *Fastnachtspiel* est-il une survivance du *mime* ou un genre parallèle?

Un des faits caractéristiques du Moyen âge, c'est la vague de folie qui à ce moment déferle sur l'Europe. Elle s'exprime dans les fêtes des fous, des ânes, des sots, dans le *Narrenschiff*, dans les productions artistiques: sculptures grotesques, gargouilles grimaçantes; elle envahit même les mystères et les moralités, dont le but n'était pourtant pas de faire rire, mais qui perdent peu à peu leur caractère sévère et sacré, deviennent de plus en plus burlesques et finissent par disparaître tout à fait en se confondant avec la farce comique. C'est là que s'affirme le mieux le besoin de rire de cette époque. Les farces qui nous sont parvenues sont comme autant d'échos des éclats de rire et des ébats joyeux d'une humanité jeune et vigoureuse, pleine de vie et d'entrain, qui dans l'exubérance de son enfance, gaspille en folies des forces inemployées.

La floraison de farces, qui envahit l'Europe au Moyen âge, qui, tout d'un coup, semble sortir du néant pour absorber le répertoire comique des différents pays, est assez importante pour mériter quelque attention. Ce sont les *interludes* anglais qui apparaissent dès le ^{xiv}^e siècle et sont admis à la cour de la reine Elisabeth au début de son règne, où une troupe royale est chargée des représentations. Ce genre semble avoir été porté à son apogée sous le règne de Henri VIII par John Heywood, dont les pièces sont une satire mordante de la société d'alors.

Ce sont les *farsas* italiennes du ^{xv}^e siècle, qui se verront plus tard supplanter par la comédie antique et l'imitation des anciens; les *farsas* du Portugais Gil Vicente, quelques-unes

assez bien réussies, qui s'échelonnent de 1500 à 1525; les *entremesas* et *pasos* espagnols de Lope de Rueda et de Cervantes, qui s'essayent dans ce genre vers la fin du xvi^e siècle. Ce sont surtout les nombreuses farces qui, au xv^e siècle, amusent le peuple de France, répertoire considérable dont une faible partie seulement nous est parvenue, témoignages sincères de la vie d'alors et dont quelques-uns sont de petits chefs-d'œuvre. Enfin, en Allemagne, après les essais timides et médiocres de Rosenplüt et de Hans Folz, Hans Sachs cultiva la farce avec succès et fécondité. Il y exprima bien ce vent de folie, qui s'empara alors des esprits, et, le premier en Allemagne, en fit un genre littéraire où nous reconnaissons le premier échelon de la comédie moderne.

Il serait intéressant d'étudier dans son ensemble cette floraison de farces et d'en chercher l'origine pour les mieux expliquer. Mais ici, il n'en saurait être question; il faudra nous borner à rechercher l'origine du *Fastnachtspiel*. Alors nous pourrons mieux comprendre les productions de notre poète et les juger plus impartialement et à leur juste valeur.

Quelle est donc l'origine du *Fastnachtspiel* en Allemagne? On s'accorde généralement à dire que ces petits drames comiques, comme leur nom l'indique d'ailleurs, prirent naissance à l'occasion des fêtes de Carnaval; elles en sont une des nombreuses réjouissances et portent d'ailleurs bien le caractère de ces fêtes populaires.

Le Carnaval qui peu à peu a perdu de sa gaîté naïve et de ses extravagances pittoresques, n'est plus aujourd'hui qu'un pâle reflet des fêtes d'antan. Intimement lié à la vie religieuse, il était considéré au Moyen âge presque comme une institution de l'Eglise dont il avait l'appui, et où il puisait sa force. A la veille du Carême, au moment de renoncer pour de longues semaines aux plaisirs de ce monde, on veut se dédommager par avance des longues journées sérieuses et mornes qui vont commencer; et pour entrer avec plus de courage dans cette période de recueillement, ce grand acte de contrition, chacun lâche une dernière fois la bride à toutes ses fantaisies et se laisse entraîner par le vent de folie qui souffle sur toute la Chrétienté.

Alors défile à travers les vieilles rues de Nuremberg un cortège de joyeux masques, fifres et tambours en tête. On y voit des déguisements étranges, des diables velus, des fous armés de la batte, des géants et des nains, des animaux grotesques dont l'aspect est effrayant, des perroquets, des singes à tête d'homme, des coqs avec des ailes de dragons, crachant le feu autour d'eux. Derrière s'avance, non masqué, le cortège des jeunes patriciens, aux riches vêtements de velours bigarrés, où les feuillages et le vert dominent, portant un collier ou une ceinture, quelquefois aussi des jarretières de grelots, un chapeau couvert de plumes extravagantes, dans une main une lance, dans l'autre des rameaux de buis. Enfin, porté sur une échelle, s'avance un char symbolique, tel que bateau ou château-fort où sont représentées des scènes allégoriques : une vue de l'enfer, une femme à oreilles d'âne qui brûle dans un grand four, un simulacre de siège, un dragon à gueule béante, ou un satyre effrayant avec des cornes de Satan, des pieds en nageoires, le corps couvert de longs poils¹.

Le cortège disloqué, les réjouissances continuent de plus belle, sans que rien vienne mettre un frein aux fantaisies inattendues et abracadabrantes qui naissent alors dans tous les cerveaux. Rien ne saurait arrêter la licence déchaînée.

C'est le *Schembartlaufen*, espiègle, exubérant, impertinent, voire même grossier.

On a peine à croire que de telles réjouissances aient été autorisées par l'Eglise, encore plus qu'elles aient pris naissance dans son sein. En effet, les fêtes de Carnaval ne sont pas d'origine chrétienne. L'Eglise a pu admettre et consacrer des cérémonies déjà existantes et qui avaient des racines populaires trop profondes pour être extirpées facilement. Il est même probable qu'elle a vu là un moyen d'attirer à elle un plus grand nombre de fidèles, et, en flattant leurs goûts, de leur adoucir les exigences du culte, pour les garder dans son sein. Les fêtes mythiques du Carnaval de-

¹ Voir Bibliothèque nationale Ms. de H. S. n° 259. Scheinpartbuch.

vinrent alors les dernières réjouissances qui précèdent le Carême. Mais ce n'est pas l'Eglise qui les a créées. Aussi, quelle que soit l'étymologie des mots *Carnaval* et *Fastnacht*¹, que l'origine en soit chrétienne ou non, les fêtes de Carnaval elles-mêmes sont d'origine païenne. Rien n'empêche en effet que, au temps où elles sont entrées sous la protection de l'Eglise, on n'ait alors donné un nom de formation chrétienne à des rites qui à l'origine n'avaient rien de chrétien.

Les fêtes de Carnaval sont bel et bien d'origine mythique. Telles qu'elles nous apparaissent au Moyen âge, elles sont une survivance de fêtes cultuelles. Qu'elles se soient développées des rites de la fertilité, de cérémonies dramatiques accompagnées de danses mimiques, de promenades phalliques, comme le croit M. Rudwin, c'est possible, bien que difficile à démontrer.

Faut-il, comme lui, rapprocher les parades du *Schembart* à Nuremberg, où se rencontre parfois une nef, des processions qui, en Egypte et en Grèce, puis à Rome et en Italie, faisaient partie du culte d'Isis et du culte dionysiaque? Faut-il dire que c'est un souvenir des cérémonies accomplies dans le but d'évoquer l'esprit de fécondité et de réveiller la végétation endormie pendant l'hiver, que cette coutume, dans les défilés du *Schembart*, à Nuremberg, de se vêtir d'habits peints ou brodés de feuillage vert et de tenir à la main un bouquet de buis ou un fouet, comme le font beaucoup de masques? Peut-on faire remonter les coups qui se distribuent avec tant de générosité dans toutes les farces de Carnaval, à la flagellation qui avait pour but de chasser les

¹ Du latin *carrus navalis* (italien *carnevale* ou *carnovale*; français, portugais, espagnol: *carneval* ou *carnavel*) qui ferait remonter les coutumes du Carême aux processions païennes de l'Europe et de l'Asie occidentale?

De même l'étymologie de *fastnacht* est douteuse. Se trouve-t-on en face d'une déformation populaire du mot *vas(e)naht*, *Fasenaht*, composé de *fasen* = *faseln*, *folâtrer*, *s'amuser*, et de *naht*, soit « *soir de plaisir, commencement des plaisanteries et des folies* », qui serait devenu *Fastnacht* = *commencement du jeûne*, sous l'influence des nouvelles exigences religieuses et par analogie avec l'observance du Carême? Ou bien, la forme *vastnaht*, qui existe en mhd. à côté de *vasenaht* et *vasnaht*, est-elle régulière, et contient-elle déjà l'idée de « *fasten* »?

mauvais esprits, opposés au réveil de la végétation, et y rattacher les *Kampfgespräche* ou *débats*, si populaires au Moyen âge, ainsi que les scènes de justice, nombreuses dans les farces? Il faudrait des preuves pour en être certain; et ces preuves manquent. Il faut donc se borner à des hypothèses.

Qu'il soit permis, en tout cas, de remarquer que les danses, nombreuses dans les farces de Carnaval (cf. *Keller* 6, 51, 59, 67, 89, 111) et dont Hans Sachs se souvient encore dans ses premières pièces¹, rappellent les danses de nombreuses cérémonies rituelles.

Les processions de masques de Nuremberg et de toute l'Allemagne du Moyen âge ont gardé un caractère démoniaque digne de leur origine païenne. Aussi ne serons-nous guère étonnés de rencontrer, dans les fêtes de Carnaval, des gens à têtes d'animaux, des *Narren* et des diables qui ont gardé la voracité, la vulgarité, l'obscénité même des démons phalliques. Les *Neidhartspiele* sont sans aucun doute une réminiscence des fêtes et réjouissances du mois de mai (dont Hans Sachs a même conservé la ronde et le couplet qui l'accompagne, comme nous verrons plus loin).

Ainsi, nombreuses sont les coutumes de Carnaval que l'Europe chrétienne a héritées de ses ancêtres païens et où l'esprit barbare s'est conservé au Moyen âge, et, résistant à la civilisation moderne, subsiste encore aujourd'hui dans les fêtes de Carnaval.

C'est à l'occasion des réjouissances de Carnaval que sont nés ces drames populaires qui, à la fin du Moyen âge et encore au xv^e siècle, feront la joie de tous, jeunes et vieux. Quand? et comment? Il est difficile de rien affirmer. Ont-ils pris naissance directement dans les rites païens, ou se détachent-ils du drame liturgique? Autant d'hypothèses. Mais on ne peut nier qu'ils aient le caractère naïf et barbare des rites païens qui ont engendré le Carnaval.

Ainsi, le *Fastnachtspiel* naît de cérémonies païennes, comme la comédie d'Aristophane, comme le mime ancien était né des promenades phalliques et de rites semblables

¹ Cf. *Fastn.* 2, 9

à ceux que nous avons vus se développer dans les pays germaniques. Ayant même origine, on peut donc dire que le *Fastnachtspiel* est le parallèle allemand du mime latin-grec.

En effet, certaines pièces¹ pourraient fort bien être des mimes et il est facile de faire un rapprochement. Considérons d'un peu plus près les ressemblances des pièces de notre poète avec leur équivalent grec et latin.

Elles sont fort nombreuses, tant en ce qui concerne les sujets et les types de personnages qu'en ce qui concerne la forme et le ton général².

Les mimes sont des tableaux de genre, aussi différents de la comédie ancienne que les *Fastnachtspiele* sont différents de la comédie proprement dite. Théophraste les distingue nettement. Tandis que la comédie représente la destinée de certaines personnes particulières, le mime met à la scène toute la vie humaine, sous ses beaux comme sous ses vilains aspects. La comédie se tient dans les limites convenues de la morale; le mime descend jusqu'aux plus bas degrés de l'échelle sociale, et n'hésite pas à traiter des sujets interdits à la comédie: adultère, amour, tous les péchés, tous les vices sont de son ressort.

Ceux qui nous sont parvenus sont des pièces très courtes, présentées en une suite de tableaux rapides, sans divisions scéniques; chez Théocrite ils ne dépassent jamais trois cents vers, en moyenne ils en ont cent cinquante; ceux d'Héronidas sont plus courts encore. Les *Fastnachtspiele* de Hans Sachs ne dépassent généralement pas quatre cents vers; quelques-uns seulement atteignent cinq cents vers, mais ce ne sont pas les meilleurs.

¹ *Fastn.* 40 et 79.

² H. Reich a déjà montré les ressemblances entre le mime ancien et la farce en général dans *Der Mimus*. . . Plus récemment M. Rudwin a rapproché les farces de Carnaval du mime dans *The origin of the German Carnival Comedy*, p. 50. Mais ce travail était déjà presque achevé, et nous avions nous-même fait le même parallèle avec les *Fastnachtspiele* de Hans Sachs, quand le livre de M. Rudwin nous est parvenu.

Dans ces deux genres, peu de complications; l'agencement des pièces est simplifié jusqu'à l'extrême, au risque de faire faire à l'action un saut dans l'espace ou le temps, dont le spectateur devra s'accommoder. Chez Hans Sachs, nous le verrons, ces changements de scène, arbitraires et inattendus, sont fréquents et ne laissent pas d'être amusants.

La cadence simple du *Fastnachtspiel*, la rime plate se rapprochent souvent de la prose; en cela assez semblable à la forme mimique, mi-partie rythmée, mi-partie prose. Et le *Knittelvers* de Hans Sachs fait songer au rythme irrégulier et grotesque, que le mime emploie parfois.

Comme ceux du mime, les sujets des farces sont très variés; on y trouve tous les tons, depuis le langage tragique, jusqu'au jargon des rues. Les thèmes favoris de la farce et du mime se ressemblent davantage encore. Le mime emprunte ses sujets de préférence à la vie humaine tout entière; il descend jusqu'aux milieux les plus bas de la société et y séjourne volontiers: ce sont des scènes de jalousie, des conversations équivoques, une visite à un cordonnier, une scène d'école, etc. Hans Sachs lui aussi puise dans la vie sous ses multiples aspects, et ne dédaigne pas de descendre dans les rues, d'entrer dans les auberges pour y épier les faits et gestes des basses classes. Lisons par exemple *Der pauer mit dem saffran*¹, dont nous aurons l'occasion de reparler plus loin. C'est une scène de marché, qui semble n'avoir été composée que dans le but de faire un tableau de genre, une étude du caractère et des mœurs des paysans, dans le cadre qui leur est familier. Les pièces 28 et 82 sont des batailles entre parents et amis, sans autre but apparent que le désir de représenter dans tout son réalisme une scène de ménage ou une dispute. Cela ne rappelle-t-il pas les scènes de marché fréquentes dans les mimes, les études de femmes jalouses ou méchantes, les querelles accompagnées de coups de poings, qui étaient aussi le but évident de nombreux mimes? En tous cas, on ne peut s'empêcher de les rapprocher.

¹ *Fastn.* 79.

Un des sujets préférés du mime, celui qui semble avoir remporté les plus grands succès auprès des Romains, c'est l'amour sous toutes ses formes, permis et défendu, et surtout l'adultère. Naturellement dans de telles pièces les ministres du culte ne sont pas oubliés; ils servent de cible à des plaisanteries séculaires. Nous avons vu des sujets semblables chez Hans Sachs; ils sont des plus fréquents. Sans parler des deux premières pièces, composées à une époque d'hypochondrie poétique, à la suite d'expériences malheureuses, et dictées sans aucun doute par ses sentiments personnels, nombre de ses farces ne sont autre chose que l'histoire de femmes qui trompent leur mari¹, de galants ridicules², ou les vicissitudes qu'ont à supporter les jeunes gens atteints par les flèches de l'amour³. Ou bien ce sont des jaloux dupés⁴, des amants surpris qui se cachent dans une armoire ou une cheminée⁵, comme Falstaff dans un panier à linge. Et ce siècle de révolte religieuse se fait des gorges chaudes des aventures de curés en quête de bonnes fortunes⁶, des nombreux traits décochés au clergé, à sa vie, à ses vices déguisés, aux scandales fréquents dont ils sont cause.

Certes, ce sujet peut avoir tenté Hans Sachs parce qu'il était pour ainsi dire d'actualité, parce qu'autour de lui les Réformateurs se faisaient un devoir et un malin plaisir de dénoncer tous les vices du clergé; des allusions à son époque lui devenaient dès lors faciles. Pourtant il y a lieu de remarquer que le même sujet se retrouve dans les farces en France dès le xv^e siècle, où il ne peut être inspiré par la Réforme.

En tous cas, il est permis de noter que c'est là un sujet de mime. De plus, n'est-ce pas précisément un des caractères du mime, de faire allusion aux événements politiques et sociaux contemporains, sans en faire d'ailleurs le but principal de la pièce? C'est aussi cette place secondaire qu'ils

¹ *Fastn.* 38, 43, 46, 54, 61, 74.

² *Fastn.* 62.

³ *Fastn.* 23, 39.

⁴ *Fastn.* 37.

⁵ *Fastn.* 37. Cf. Reich, p. 835.

⁶ *Fastn.* 37-57.

tiennent chez notre poète, bien qu'ils donnent aujourd'hui des renseignements fort précieux sur ces siècles lointains. En tout cas, sans prétendre que l'atmosphère de la Réforme a seule entraîné Hans Sachs à traiter ces sujets, il faut reconnaître qu'elle a pu ajouter un charme particulier à des thèmes déjà populaires et que lui offrait la tradition.

Notre poète fait aussi dans son œuvre une large place à la vie conjugale avec ses joies et ses peines: querelles entre époux, batailles aussi ne manquant jamais d'exciter les rires; et les femmes vicieuses, les belles-mères indignes et les maris trompés sont en faveur auprès des spectateurs de Nuremberg au xv^e siècle, comme dans le mime ancien¹. Evidemment dans de telles querelles le vocabulaire n'est pas des plus choisis, et il n'y faudra pas chercher des modèles de bienséance. De même les situations ne sont pas toujours conformes à la morale. Ovide reproche au mime ses paroles licencieuses et ses tableaux lascifs: «*Une infidèle a-t-elle inventé un nouveau tour pour tromper son mari, dit-il, on l'applaudit, on lui décerne la palme*»². C'est vrai, et il en est de même dans le *Fastnachtspiel*; c'est le plus malin qui a les rieurs de son côté, comme souvent dans la vie, d'ailleurs.

Il faut remarquer pourtant que chez Hans Sachs la *cata carissa*, si chère au mime, disparaît presque entièrement. On ne la retrouve guère que dans deux pièces³, car dans la farce n° 63, elle a un rôle moral très net. Quant à son compère *copo compilatus*, le type le plus commun du mime, on n'en trouve plus aucune trace. Ils ont fait place au cabaretier et à la vieille femme. C'est que Hans Sachs a sacrifié, comme nous le verrons plus loin, au besoin d'épurer un peu ces pièces, dont l'obscénité, permise au temps de la décadence antique, n'aurait pas convenu au peuple de la Réforme.

Poussé par les mêmes scrupules, Hans Sachs élimine volontairement de son répertoire les procès devant les tribunaux, où la mauvaise entente conduit souvent les deux époux.

¹ Cf. H. Reich, loc. cit. p. 835.

² Ovide: *Trist.* Lib. II v. 497 sq.

³ *Fastn.* 57 et 40.

Ces sujets toujours équivoques et souvent bourrés de grossièretés étaient des plus fréquents dans le mime ancien¹ et encore dans les premiers *Fastnachtspiele* du xv^e siècle, chez Rosenplüt et Hans Folz. Chez Hans Sachs nous retrouvons encore des traces de débats judiciaires, mais du moins ce ne sont plus des procès en séparation.

Les personnages aussi se ressemblent. Le *Narr* de Hans Sachs rappelle le *stupidus*, le *mimus calvus* du mime, comme les plaisanteries et lazzi du fou de cour rappellent les *artes mimicae* du *morio* antique. C'est ce type rude et choquant, tel qu'il était dans les cours de l'empire décadent, que nous retrouvons chez Hans Sachs². Le *stupidus*, qui deviendra l'*Arlechino* de la *comedia dell Arte*, aux dépens duquel la foule s'amuse, et le *derisor*, le *scurra*, qui sait aussi s'amuser aux dépens des autres, dénoncer les sottises humaines et, abrité sous le masque de la folie, prodiguer ses moqueries au monde, ne les retrouvons-nous pas aussi chez notre poète?

C'est Morolf, le bouffon de la farce si populaire de *Salomon et Morolf*, qui parodie trivialement toute une série de sentences graves énoncées par le roi; c'est le pauvre fou, semblable au clown toujours battu, de la pièce 83: *Der Doctor mit der grosen nasen*. Il n'est pourtant pas si niais qu'il le paraît, avouons-le, car la leçon qu'il tire de son aventure pourrait servir à bien d'autres qui se croient sages et sensés. En effet, dans les farces comme dans le mime, comme dans la réalité, ce ne sont pas toujours les bouffons qui portent la *Narrenkappe*, et plus d'un qui se croit fin, pourrait apprendre d'eux maint conseil de sagesse. C'est enfin le malin, l'impitoyable Eulenspiegel, chevalier d'industrie comme Falstaff, qui vit aux dépens de la sottise humaine. Pauvre comme tous les types et parasites du mime, il est devenu une figure populaire dont le répertoire est aussi inépuisable qu'inattendu³.

¹ Cf. H. Reich, loc. cit. p. 835.

² *Fastn.* 75.

³ *Fastn.* 51, 58, 72, 77.

Beaucoup d'autres personnages du mime, dont la satire attaque les ridicules, ont encore ce caractère du *stupidus* bafoûé qui soulève les rires. Toutes les classes, toutes les professions, les paysans et la vie paysanne avec tous les détails de la basse-cour et de la porcherie, les charlatans, le médecin qui parle un jargon ridicule, moines, juifs, servent de cible à la malignité du mime; mais sa cible préférée, c'est encore la vieille femme, laide, repoussante même, vicieuse, méchante, rouée. Tous ces types nous les retrouvons avec les mêmes traits dans les *Fastnachtspiele*, où ils forment une peinture burlesque et réaliste.

Car le *Fastnachtspiel*, comme le mime, s'efforce avant tout de donner une image fidèle, bien que caricaturée, de l'humanité avec ses qualités et ses défauts, surtout avec ses défauts. C'est pourquoi nous avons trouvé si souvent des peintures de la vie conjugale et des scènes multiples de la vie journalière.

La plupart des personnages du mime et de la farce sont des types représentant telle qualité ou tel défaut, et c'est pourquoi dans un grand nombre de *Fastnachtspiele* de Hans Sachs, surtout dans les premiers, comme dans les farces plus anciennes du xv^e siècle, comme dans le mime, ils n'ont d'autre nom que celui du type qu'ils représentent: ils s'appellent le vieux, le chevalier, la jeune fille, le valet, le paysan, le joueur, l'ivrogne, l'avare, le prodigue, le malade, le marchand etc., comme le maître d'école, l'entremetteuse, la femme jalouse, le cordonnier, etc., de Héronidas. Nous rencontrons même les brigands, les chevaliers d'industrie, les coupe-bourses du mime sous la forme germanisée de *Raubritter* et de *Landsknechte*. La scène classique du soldat fanfaron se retrouve aussi dans une farce¹, où elle est si peu à sa place que l'on ne peut s'empêcher de voir dans ce paysan grotesque le descendant des chevaliers du Moyen âge, dont l'ancêtre était sans doute le *miles gloriosus*.

¹ *Fastn.* 79.

Mais plus encore que les sujets et les types divers de personnages, c'est le milieu où tous ces personnages évoluent et s'agitent, c'est cette suite ininterrompue de cabales, de tromperies, de supercheries, de railleries, mêlées de batailles et de disputes, c'est surtout la façon dont Hans Sachs exécute cette peinture de l'humanité, c'est la vérité de la vie jusque dans ses moindres détails, c'est la sereine gaîté, qui, succédant à tous les imbroglios et à toutes les surprises, vient clore la pièce, qui rappelle le mime d'une manière frappante.

Comme lui, la farce de Hans Sachs est le miroir de la société contemporaine; nous y trouvons les traits de la vertu, l'opprobre du vice, l'image fidèle d'un siècle disparu, avec toutes ses faiblesses et toutes ses tares. Image pleine de réalisme dans le choix des sujets comme dans celui des personnages, dans la peinture de la vie, comme dans l'expression de ses misères, de ses ridicules et de ses trivialités. La farce a les couleurs crues du mime, et souvent on en retrouve les hardiesses.

Bien que l'un et l'autre offrent une caricature de la vie, on ne peut manquer de remarquer combien cette peinture réaliste est inspirée par une connaissance profonde de l'humanité. Hans Sachs se montre psychologue dans la peinture de ses caractères qui n'est pas inférieure à l'observation profonde que l'on note dans les anciens mimes. Les personnages s'agitent parfois devant nous, pleins de vie et de réalité saisissante; non seulement nous sommes témoins de leurs faits et gestes, mais le mobile même de leurs actions n'échappe à personne. C'est le cabaretier ou le fripon¹ dont la physionomie est prise sur le vif; l'avare qui, trompeur trompé, se lamente sur la malhonnêteté du monde², ou Grampas dont l'égoïsme passe encore la ladrerie³, et une foule d'autres types que la vie fait passer tous les jours devant nos yeux.

Comme les marionnettes, la plupart de ces personnages ont encore quelque chose de grotesque, une certaine rudesse

¹ *Fastn.* 25.

² *Fastn.* 32.

³ *Fastn.* 21.

de mouvements et de contours; les angles de leurs traits ne se sont pas encore arrondis, ils restent tous aigus et taillés à coups de serpe. Le personnage central, autour duquel se groupe tout un monde secondaire, qu'il s'appelle Eulenspiegel, diable ou Fürwitz, qu'il soit le tzigane ou Vénus, revêt partout un aspect rude, bizarre, burlesque aussi et un peu repoussant, l'apparence d'un faune qui garde encore l'empreinte de son origine bestiale, d'un satyre sorti de son bois pour venir railler et flageller les travers des hommes. Les personnages sont encore pour la plupart très près de la nature primitive. Quelquefois, comme sur la scène grecque, ils sont grotesques ou même difformes, car l'anormal fait rire le peuple.

Quelques autres, auprès d'eux, sont d'essence tout à fait différente. Ce sont des dieux ou des déesses, qui, comme les dieux de la fable, sont surnaturels, prodigieux et enveloppés d'un peu de fantasmagorie, mais ont gardé tout de même quelque chose d'humain. Hans Sachs comme tout le Moyen âge et la Renaissance a une conception tout humaine de la divinité: incapable de concevoir un être différent de ceux qu'il connaît, il en fait des hommes revêtus d'attributs divins. C'est Apollon, descendant sur terre pour donner des conseils aux hommes¹; Jupiter qui, choisi comme arbitre, jugera en dernier ressort dans le conflit des classes², ou Pluton qui discute avec la pauvreté pour lui montrer qu'il est meilleur qu'elle³. Le mélange de réalisme bas avec des éléments mythologiques, que nous trouvons chez notre poète, correspond tout à fait au caractère du mime primitif⁴.

On pourrait rapprocher aussi de ces figures les formules magiques, nombreuses chez Hans Sachs, où s'exprime le même goût de mêler l'au-delà aux détails de la vie journalière, en même temps que la tendance du peuple primitif à croire à des interventions surnaturelles. Est-ce là un reste de la superstition antique, est-ce influence du siècle de la

¹ *Fastn.* 30.

² *Fastn.* 78.

³ *Fastn.* 3.

⁴ Cf. Chambers I, 4.

magie noire et de Faust? En tout cas, remarquons que notre poète, lui, ne s'y laisse pas prendre. Ses formules cabalistiques n'ont qu'un but: soulever le rire des spectateurs; car le comique ne perd jamais ses droits, et le *risus mimicus* d'autrefois, on l'entend aussi bien dans les farces de Carnaval. Mais s'il est le but unique de beaucoup de farces, il n'est pas toujours assez puissant pour refouler entièrement le ton sérieux, qui souvent trouve sa place auprès de la gaîté, quelquefois même règne seul. De plus, il s'y joint bien souvent, comme nous le verrons plus loin, un besoin de moraliser, et, sous des apparences enjouées, de déguiser un peu un enseignement utile. Ce mélange d'éléments réalistes et fantastiques, comiques jusqu'au burlesque, et sérieux jusqu'à la gravité, l'humour débordant et sans frein mêlé à la tendance moralisatrice, tout rappelle le mime latin-grec d'une manière frappante.

Le langage, dans le mime comme dans le *Fastnachtspiel*, est emprunté aux classes populaires qui ont déjà fourni les sujets, c'est-à-dire aux couches les plus basses de la société. Aussi cette langue, dialectale, est-elle le plus souvent, pleine du réalisme le plus cru et le moins déguisé. C'est ce caractère populaire de la langue qui explique dans le mime de Sophron, comme dans celui de ses successeurs, Théocrite et Hérondas, comme dans les *Fastnachtspiele* de Hans Sachs, la multitude de proverbes et d'expressions proverbiales qu'on rencontre à chaque pas et où s'exprime la sagesse populaire, faite de siècles d'observations et d'expérience. Cette richesse de proverbes est telle qu'elle offrirait, et a déjà donné matière à des études particulières¹.

Un autre élément primitif commun à la farce et au mime, c'est l'introduction ou plutôt la persistance de la danse dans ces pièces. Il y en a quelques-unes chez Hans Sachs, mais elles sont déjà moins fréquentes que chez Hans Folz et Rosenplüt. C'est là une trace du *Schembart*, *comos*

¹ Cf. Ch. Schweitzer: Sprichwörter und sprichwörtliche Redensarten bei Hans Sachs. 1894. Nürnberg. — Handschin: Das Sprichwort bei Hans Sachs (Bull. of the Univ. of Wisconsin), 1904.

nurembergeois qui a donné naissance au *Fastnachtspiel*. Ainsi dans la pièce intitulée *Das Hoffgesindt Veneris*¹, écrite en 1517, une des plus imparfaites et des plus primitives, qui rappelle encore par beaucoup de caractères les *Fastnachtspiele* du xv^e siècle, c'est une danse qui vient clore le débat, bien que la pièce ne ressemble en rien à une réjouissance. Il ne peut s'agir ici d'une danse de Carnaval qui suivrait la représentation; car Vénus, la danse finie, s'avance pour expliquer la morale de la pièce et donner quelques conseils aux spectateurs. Plus tard encore, d'autres présentent le même caractère inattendu et traditionnel². Remarquons que ce ne sont pas seulement des pièces de Hans Sachs à ses débuts. Le *Fastnachtspiel* 39 date de 1552. La dernière farce de Hans Sachs est de 1560; c'est dire que cette réminiscence des danses de masques pendant les fêtes de Carnaval se retrouve même vers la fin de sa carrière.

On trouve même dans une pièce de notre poète des chants ou plutôt des couplets comme les aimaient le mime et la farce française. C'est dans le *Fastnachtspiel Neidhart mit dem feyhel*³, où la cour tout d'abord, puis un groupe de paysans chantent chacun un rondeau, en dansant autour de la violette, messagère du printemps.

Il faut cependant noter une différence très importante entre la farce et le mime. Nous ne retrouvons pas chez Hans Sachs l'immoralité ni l'obscénité qui est le pivot du mime antique. Car Hans Sachs est un bourgeois allemand, imbu des principes de la Réforme, et ses œuvres ont à subir l'épreuve de la censure de Nuremberg, raisons assez nombreuses pour qu'il débarrasse ses pièces de toutes les malproprietés qui encombraient la scène antique. Nous avons vu que la *cata carissa* a presque entièrement disparu de ses pièces; nous ne trouvons pas non plus de sujets indécents ou même équivoques dans son répertoire, à l'exception d'une pièce qui est malpropre sans être obscène.

¹ *Fastn.* 2.

² *Fastn.* 9 (1535). *Fastn.* 39 (1552).

³ *Fastn.* 75.

A cette différence près, le *Fastnachtspiel* est bien l'équivalent du mime.

Est-ce à dire qu'il y aurait relation au lieu de parallélisme? Le *Fastnachtspiel* serait-il non le cousin, mais le fils du mime? C'est une question qu'il est bien difficile, sinon impossible de résoudre, du moins dans l'état actuel de nos connaissances. Le mime, devenu genre littéraire dans les mains de Sophron, a connu dans l'antiquité des siècles de gloire. Il a passionné la Grèce et Rome, les faibles et les puissants, jusqu'aux sénateurs et au clergé lui-même; et c'est en vain que les Pères de l'Eglise essayèrent de rappeler les foules aux convenances. Puis il a passé en Italie, en Gaule, dans l'Allemagne occidentale et en Grande-Bretagne, où son succès ne fut pas moindre. Il a continué à vivre, même après que le théâtre antique fut tombé en ruines. Après l'occupation d'Athènes par Lysandre et sous les régimes oppressifs qui suivirent, le genre mimique grandit et supplanta les autres genres. Dans la Germanie occidentale, on le retrouve florissant jusqu'au v^e siècle. Mais ensuite on en perd la trace. S'est-il conservé par tradition orale jusqu'au xv^e siècle, où Rosenplüt et Hans Folz le remettent en faveur? Est-il vrai qu'il ait subsisté jusqu'au Moyen âge, joué en cachette et sous une forme corrompue, comme le croit Riccoboni? Les jongleurs qui errent à travers l'Europe au Moyen âge ont-ils contribué à perpétuer cette tradition, servant de chaînon intermédiaire entre le mime ancien et la farce moderne? Et les auteurs de farces se seraient-ils inspirés, au Moyen âge, de ces anciens mimes, consciemment ou non, continuant à cultiver un genre populaire traditionnel? C'est un problème bien difficile à résoudre. Il n'est pas certain que les jongleurs aient joué des mimes. Il manque donc toute preuve que le chaînon intermédiaire ait vraiment existé. Il est vrai qu'un grand nombre d'usages de toutes sortes ont bien persisté depuis la plus haute antiquité jusqu'au Moyen âge, mais il faut reconnaître que quelques coutumes se conservent plus facilement qu'une chose aussi compliquée que des représentations et des créations dramatiques.

D'ailleurs les premières farces qui nous sont parvenues sont d'une telle simplicité et d'une telle imperfection qu'elles semblent révéler les débuts d'une manifestation dramatique, plutôt que des souvenirs, même imparfaits, d'un art déjà développé. Ce sont quelques timides essais de défilés ou de dialogues, bien inférieurs aux mimes anciens, et rien ne fait supposer qu'ils en soient des survivances.

Quant à toutes les ressemblances que nous avons notées, elles ne prouvent rien. En effet, l'un comme l'autre étant des genres populaires, mime et *Fastnachtspiel* puisent leurs sujets et leurs personnages dans les milieux populaires, en expriment l'esprit, les manières et le langage. Or, au fond, l'humanité est toujours et partout semblable à elle-même : ce sont toujours les mêmes personnages qui sont ridicules partout, c'est toujours des mêmes qu'on se moque. De plus, il faut remarquer que la farce du Moyen âge et de la Renaissance emprunte la plupart du temps ses sujets aux conteurs, aux fabliaux, donc à ce fonds populaire si ancien qu'il était devenu un bien universel commun à tous, une part du domaine public.

Il est donc douteux qu'on puisse prouver une filiation entre le mime et le *Fastnachtspiel* à l'aide de ces ressemblances. Si elle existe, ce qui est possible, elle n'est pas démontrable actuellement. En tout cas, il ne peut être question ici de résoudre un problème aussi compliqué.

N'y aurait-il pas plutôt une communauté d'origine qui explique les nombreuses ressemblances entre ces deux genres? Faut-il croire que, de même que la danse mimée est commune à tous les peuples primitifs, de même le drame populaire burlesque, degré un peu plus élevé dans l'évolution sociale, serait commun à tous les peuples un peu plus développés, sans qu'aucun n'apprenne rien au voisin? Et alors, farce, *Fastnachtspiel*, *entremesa*, etc. qui envahissent l'Europe au Moyen âge, et dont on retrouve les équivalents encore aujourd'hui dans l'Inde, seraient-ils des productions distinctes et indépendantes des différents peuples à un certain degré

de leur développement? En effet, elles naissent toutes des cérémonies païennes, partout identiques chez tous les peuples ariens.

Rien de plus naturel à l'homme, d'ailleurs, que l'imitation. Les enfants tout jeunes ne jouent-il pas « au père et à la mère », « à la marchande », « au médecin », enfin, ne s'amuse-t-il pas à imiter ceux qu'ils voient autour d'eux, et cela le plus naturellement du monde? Ce besoin naturel a pu donner naissance à la comédie populaire, comme les cérémonies du culte donnèrent naissance au drame liturgique, indépendamment de celui-ci, ou influencé par lui. C'est ce que nous penchons à croire, bien qu'il soit impossible aussi de le prouver.

Quoi qu'il en soit, il est certain que Hans Sachs se rattache au siècle qui le précède immédiatement. S'il a conscience de continuer une tradition, c'est celle que lui livrent les auteurs du ^{xv}^e siècle, qu'elle soit purement germanique ou qu'elle ait sa source dans l'antiquité.

Que le *Fastnachtspiel* naisse directement du mime, qui renaîtrait à la vie après un long assoupissement, ou qu'il naisse de rites religieux sur le sol allemand comme le mime était né des promenades phalliques, il suffit pour l'étude qui nous occupe, d'avoir rapproché ces deux genres. Leurs similitudes de fond et de forme, leur même origine, la persistance dans l'un et l'autre de certains usages et caractères traditionnels aident à mieux comprendre et apprécier à leur juste valeur les pièces de notre poète, non seulement en mettant dans leur vrai jour les fautes qu'explique une longue tradition, mais encore en montrant comment l'humble dépôt que lui transmirent les générations précédentes, se transforma dans ses mains en un vrai trésor et devint le germe du théâtre moderne.

CHAPITRE III

Les sources de Hans Sachs

Sources principales des farces. — Transformation de la source: en vue d'en faire un drame. — Transformation du sujet: il supprime, change, ajoute. — Transformation des personnages: leur nombre, leur caractéristique. — Ils deviennent Nurembergeois. — Détails. — Forme. — Emprunts. — Différences. — Originalité de Hans Sachs.

Le cadre restreint de ce travail ne nous permet pas de traiter la question des sources, même d'une façon superficielle. C'est une question si complexe que des années de recherches n'ont pas réussi à l'épuiser. D'excellents travaux ont mis à jour une grande partie des sources des *Fastnachtspiele* et ont permis de voir suffisamment comment le poète procédait en face de son modèle. Il y a certes encore trop de sources inconnues ou douteuses, mais nous laissons à d'autres le soin de faire la lumière.

Ce qui rend l'étude des sources difficile chez Hans Sachs, c'est que le plus souvent il ne se contente pas de broder sur un thème unique; mais il aime, dans ces petits drames, à mêler plusieurs versions différentes puisées çà et là, à les combiner à sa manière et pour le but qu'il se propose. Il semble prendre sa tâche au sérieux et il se met à l'œuvre, rassemblant d'abord toutes les versions, tous les livres sur le même sujet qu'il peut se procurer, comme l'historien recherche et compile les faits et documents; puis, choisissant çà et là les traits dont il a besoin, il en fait un tout nouveau, qui répond à son intention personnelle. Aussi est-il extrêmement difficile de retrouver la source dans des pièces qui puisent ainsi dans tant de fonds divers. Cette étude, qui ne peut se faire qu'en détail, et en comparant les textes mot à mot, ne peut prendre place ici. Nous nous bornerons donc à faire un court inventaire des livres anciens ou modernes auxquels Hans Sachs a emprunté ses sujets multiples, pour résumer l'état actuel de la question¹.

¹ Voir à l'appendice le tableau des sources et remarques.

Les sources auxquelles notre poète va puiser sont nombreuses et diverses, car ses lectures sont infinies. Toujours insatiable, il se jette avec avidité sur tous les livres que les progrès de l'imprimerie répandent à profusion dans le monde à cette époque: histoire ancienne et moderne, récits de voyages, poètes anciens, philosophes, auteurs allemands et étrangers, il s'empare de tout ce qu'il trouve et le dévore avidement. Il emprunte ce qui lui convient et retient mainte chose en sa mémoire pour s'en servir au besoin.

Les sujets qu'il tire des auteurs de l'Antiquité sont très rares dans les *Fastnachtspiele*, car ils sont trop amples pour convenir à des drames aussi simples que les farces de Carnaval. Ils fourniront un plus grand appoint aux comédies et aux tragédies.

Hans Sachs puise plus souvent dans la littérature du Moyen âge: le *Gesamtabenteuer*, qu'il le connaisse dans le texte ancien ou dans une édition modernisée, lui offrira *Das heiss Eysen*¹ et peut-être d'autres². Plus près de lui, Rosenplüt lui inspire une de ses meilleures pièces, *Der farendt Schüler mit dem Teuffelbannen*³, et son autre devancier Hans Folz, plusieurs sujets favoris du tréteau, tel *Der böss Rauch*⁴. Ici peut-être plus que partout ailleurs, Hans Sachs mettra son amour-propre à surpasser son modèle, pour faire mieux que ses concurrents du siècle passé; nous verrons s'il y réussit.

Dans la littérature contemporaine, c'est surtout Boccace qui inspire Hans Sachs. Boccace semble être son conteur favori: il est pour lui une source féconde à laquelle toute sa vie il reviendra puiser. Dès ses premières expériences pénibles, c'est dans le *Décameron* que notre poète cherche quelque consolation à sa douleur, et tous les exemples d'amour malheureux des *Cent Nouvelles* rendent un peu de calme à son cœur. Il est curieux de remarquer combien ces peintures licencieuses altèrent peu la sérénité de son âme:

¹ *Fastn.* 38.

² Cf. appendice.

³ *Fastn.* 37.

⁴ *Fastn.* 28, peut-être aussi *Fastn.* 25 et *Fastn.* 4.

aux purs toutes choses sont pures. Ce sont des échos de cette lecture et de quelques autres que nous trouvons dans la première de ses pièces *Von der Eygenschafft der Lieb*¹. Mainte journée offre un sujet de farce à notre poète. C'est à ce recueil qu'il emprunte *Der Ketzermeister mit den vil kessel suppen*², ainsi que toute une série ininterrompue³, et bien d'autres encore⁴, un tribut assez important par conséquent.

Ajoutons que ce n'est pas au texte même qu'il faudra nous reporter pour comparer les œuvres de notre poète avec leur source, mais à une traduction. Quant aux autres œuvres de Boccace, nous n'en trouvons que fort peu de traces dans les *Fastnachtspiele*.

La vie d'Esopé, en traduction aussi, a donné lieu à la dernière farce, si toutefois nous pouvons avec notre poète l'appeler de ce nom.

Le récit des exploits d'Eulenspiegel, le maître de tous les rusés compères, devait plaire à notre malicieux poète. C'est seulement assez tard pourtant qu'il vient y puiser quelques bons tours à mettre à la scène: *Ewlenspiegel mit den blinden*⁵, *Ewlenspiegel mit der pfaffen kellerin und dem pfert*⁶, *Ewlenspiegel mit dem pelczwaschen*⁷, enfin *Ewlenspiegel mit dem plaben hostuech und dem paur*⁸.

Un autre livre humoristique, *Schimpf und Ernst*, de Pauli, lui fournit aussi plus d'un thème comique: *Der fahrendt Schuler im Paradeiss*⁹, *Der kauffmann mit den alten weibern*¹⁰ et encore quelques autres¹¹. Petrus Alfonsus donne la farce n° 31.

¹ *Fastn.* 1.

² *Fastn.* 53. Cf. appendice.

³ *Fastn.* 41, 42, 43, 45, 46.

⁴ *Fastn.* 16, 23, 26, 27, 62, 81, 84.

⁵ *Fastn.* 51.

⁶ *Fastn.* 58.

⁷ *Fastn.* 72.

⁸ *Fastn.* 77.

⁹ *Fastn.* 22.

¹⁰ *Fastn.* 19.

¹¹ *Fastn.* 24, 25, 49, 50, 63, 64.

Çà et là, ses autres lectures lui offrent quelques idées: Pétrarque (*De rebus memorandis*), Freydanck, Burckard Waldis, maint conte ancien, de vieux fabliaux, le *Narrenbuch* (Bobertag), le *Renner*, *Scherz mit der Warheydt*, le *Narrenschiff* de Sébastian Brant, les *Tütschungen* de Niclas von Wyle, aussi bien qu'Aulu-Gelle et Ovide, et combien d'autres! Quelle immense lecture pour un homme de la condition et de l'époque de notre poète; combien de plus savants n'en connaissaient pas tant!

Y a-t-il des pièces qui soient entièrement de l'invention de Hans Sachs? Oui, quelques-unes, dont le sujet est emprunté directement à la vie ou dicté par une expérience personnelle¹, mais elles sont bien peu nombreuses.

Mais, dira-t-on, le mérite de Hans Sachs est alors bien maigre, si, comme l'abeille, il se borne à butiner de livre en livre et à dérober à chacun ce qui lui convient pour faire siennes les idées d'autrui! L'imitation n'est qu'une création inférieure, certes, mais l'imitation était un procédé courant à l'époque où Hans Sachs vivait. Au xvi^e siècle, comme pendant tout le Moyen âge, il semblait tout naturel de s'emparer ainsi du bien de tous. Tout écrivain empruntait sans scrupules à son voisin ou à son devancier, car les idées de chacun appartenaient au domaine public. Nul ne donnait rien de nouveau; il s'agissait plutôt de présenter sous une forme nouvelle, avec une parure originale, ce que d'autres avaient exprimé de manière différente. Ce qui importe alors, ce n'est pas *ce* qu'on dit, mais *comment* on le dit; c'est là le but de l'art au xvi^e siècle. Le travail de Hans Sachs, qui consiste à fusionner divers éléments, ne peut se faire sans une certaine élaboration, qui est son œuvre personnelle, et sa valeur réside par conséquent dans la façon particulière dont il a su comprendre son modèle et le transformer; le sceau de son propre esprit qu'il a imprimé à son œuvre, les sentiments dont il l'a vivifiée et animée, et qui en font un tableau caractéristique, une œuvre neuve, tout cela dit assez que Hans Sachs est malgré tout original.

¹ *Fastn.* 1, 4, 12, 15, 21, 78 et peut-être 82.

Aujourd'hui encore, le peuple n'est pas si avide de spectacles nouveaux: il tient beaucoup à ce qu'il connaît déjà. C'est pour cela sans doute que se presse une foule compacte à la porte des cinématographes de nos faubourgs, pour y voir représenter les exploits de tel ou tel héros de roman-feuilleton, qu'elle connaît pourtant bien, pour avoir lu ses moindres gestes dans les feuilles de chaque matin.

Un poète peut donc rester original en imitant. C'est en ce sens que l'est Hans Sachs, car son œuvre est toute remplie de sa personnalité si nette et si sympathique. Les matériaux qu'il emprunte, il les travaille, les transforme à sa façon et les fond dans un nouveau moule; il les modèle selon l'esprit de son temps et leur imprime un cachet particulier qui est celui de son génie. Dans cette tâche il montre un talent créateur vraiment remarquable. Que de fois il fait d'un récit insipide et ennuyeux un drame plein de vie et de charme captivant! Aussi peut-on dire que Hans Sachs est en cela le plus grand poète allemand de son temps.

Voyons ensemble comment il procède, en face de son modèle, pour nous donner une œuvre qui soit de lui. Sitôt qu'il a lu quelque page, il s'empresse, comme nous l'avons dit, de rechercher tout ce qu'il peut lire sur le sujet. Il est inutile de dire qu'il prend de grandes libertés avec son modèle. Ne lui reste-t-il pas beaucoup à faire pour transformer plusieurs contes ou un récit plus ou moins sec en un drame vivant et vrai? Tout l'arrangement dramatique est à entreprendre.

Prenons un exemple. Voici Eulenspiegel qui arrive dans une auberge¹. Le personnage est connu; aussi le Volksbuch, la source de notre poète, ne se donne pas la peine de le présenter, mais raconte simplement: il arrive, s'assied et entame la conversation avec l'hôtesse, etc. Que fera Hans Sachs? Il ouvre l'action par un monologue que ne lui offre pas sa source; là nous faisons connaissance avec la caba-

¹ *Fastn.* 72.

rière, nous apprenons son caractère, celui de son mari, leur situation misérable. Quand Eulenspiegel entre, nous savons que c'est de pauvres gens qu'il va tromper. Cela suffit à éveiller l'intérêt. Presque tout le dialogue de la paysanne avec Eulenspiegel est aussi du poète: c'est une scène vive et bien menée, qui prépare la petite comédie de tout à l'heure, nous dépeint le héros, motive la punition que se verra infliger la paysanne, etc. Rien de tout cela dans le récit de quelques lignes qu'a lu Hans Sachs. Tout cela est son œuvre.

Il faut aussi, pour rendre l'action d'ensemble plus nette ou plus frappante, souligner les étapes et s'arrêter sur un point important dans le développement; ici il s'agit de préparer avec art le dénouement, qui, dans le récit, réclamait moins d'apprêt; là il faudra ménager les entrées et sorties des personnages, leurs discours, leurs gestes, et combien de détails dont l'arrangement est laissé à lui seul. C'est là son œuvre. On pourrait trouver mille exemples montrant que la dépendance du poète n'est pas signe de pauvreté d'imagination. Car il n'imité pas servilement son modèle, il ne s'en fait jamais l'esclave.

Comparons quelques farces à leur modèle, et nous verrons avec quel bonheur il sait parfois transformer jusqu'aux moindres détails.

Voici la pièce *Das Wildbad*¹ qui nous transporte tout de suite dans un repaire de brigands. Les bandits cherchent une bonne prise, car ils meurent de faim. Justement leur maître, un Edelmann, signale le passage dans le voisinage d'un riche prélat: voilà un beau coup à faire. — C'est là une bonne exposition qui est tout entière de notre poète, car Boccace, lui, accompagne le prélat depuis son départ. Bientôt les brigands voient arriver l'abbé à pied, car, le chemin étant creux, il a dû descendre de voiture. Simplification ingénieuse et utile, car Hans Sachs ne peut produire une voiture sur la scène; plus loin aussi il supprime par nécessité la suite de l'abbé. Tandis qu'il approche, chacun va prendre son poste. L'abbé arrive,

¹ *Fastn.* 27.

accompagné d'un serviteur: la vue du château le remplit d'inquiétude, non sans raison, car voici le seigneur qui le fait prisonnier. — Comme l'action est simple et claire auprès du récit de Boccace! et combien de détails nouveaux et pittoresques, que de couleurs vives chez notre poète! Confiant en sa dignité, le prélat le prend de haut et menace les brigands de l'excommunication; il décline ses nom et qualité, indique le but de son voyage (dont Hans Sachs saura si bien tirer parti) et pense ainsi leur imposer assez pour pouvoir s'éloigner tranquillement. Quelle déception de se voir obligé de se rendre! Comme on voit percer ici la malice du luthérien! Le prélat de Boccace sait seulement se mettre en colère, sans plus. Enfermé dans un sombre cachot, il n'a pour tout potage qu'un peu de pain et de l'eau à discrétion, régime bien propre à guérir un homme qui a fait trop bonne chère. Boccace, dont le héros souffre d'un mal d'estomac, lui fait servir du vin. Le séjour au cachot dure un mois chez notre poète, tandis que Boccace indiquait « *manchen Tag* »; par contre, après la guérison, l'*Edelmann* n'offre qu'un repas à son prisonnier, au lieu de l'héberger plusieurs jours, comme Chino di Tacco. L'effet merveilleux de cette cure, de ce *Wildbad* inattendu est souligné avec malice. Le prélat paie bien et s'éloigne, heureux de s'en tirer à si bon compte. La pièce se termine après son départ, Hans Sachs ne pouvant, sans nuire à la figure typique du Raubritter, emprunter le dénoûment que lui offre Boccace. Chez celui-ci le brigand, pris de scrupules, s'excuse auprès du prélat d'être réduit par le malheur à faire un tel métier. Il mendie de lui quelque aumône. Le pape, sur les instances du prélat, lui confère la dignité de *Ritter* et de *Spittelmeister*. Par contre, la vie réaliste de ce nid de brigands, la mentalité particulière de chacun, leur discorde, toute la scène entre Wursthans et Schrammfritz, mécontents de leur maître, sont de l'invention de notre poète. Il se montre donc, même auprès d'un conteur tel que Boccace, à la hauteur de sa tâche; il reste assez indépendant pour que l'on puisse dire que cette pièce est de lui surtout.

Faisons le même parallèle entre la pièce *Der Ketzermeister mit den vil kessel suppen*¹ que nous avons eu l'occasion d'analyser ailleurs, et un autre récit de Boccace, qui en est la source². Ici encore toute l'introduction est de notre poète. Il crée le personnage du « mouton », à peine indiqué chez Boccace qui dit: « *es kam ihm zu gehör* ». Quelle scène vive Hans Sachs a su ébaucher là, entre le malin Hermann Pich d'une part, et d'autre part le trop simple Simon Wirdt. L'action puise dans cette courte scène d'introduction un grand intérêt; car ayant entendu nous-mêmes les paroles inoffensives du paysan niais, la duplicité de son compagnon nous apparaîtra mieux, quand nous entendrons ce dont il l'accuse. Toute la scène suivante entre l'Inquisiteur et Hermann Pich est aussi de lui; ainsi que l'incomparable dialogue entre le paysan et son voisin Clas, qui prépare si bien, par contraste, l'entrevue avec l'Inquisiteur. Tranquillisé par son voisin, Simon Wirdt croit que le *Ketzermeister* l'a fait venir pour lui emprunter cheval et voiture. Il arrive presque confiant. Rien de tout cela dans le modèle que Hans Sachs a sous les yeux. Les hésitations du paysan qui n'ose pas, semble-t-il, expliquer à son terrible geôlier ce qui l'a embarrassé dans le sermon du matin, ses phrases hachées, ses réticences, décuplent l'importance de ses doutes, en en retardant l'expression. Toute cette scène, traitée avec art est du plus bel effet. Le calcul amusant du nombre de marmites de soupe, qui rend l'image plus frappante, est aussi de notre poète. C'est lui encore qui a l'idée très comique de nous faire voir les prêtres embarrassés par leur longue soutane dans tous ces flots de soupe. La conclusion, pleine de pointes contre l'Eglise romaine, n'est évidemment pas non plus un écho de Boccace.

Nous arrivons à conclure à la remarquable indépendance de Hans Sachs; il se montre maître de son sujet et dépasse souvent sa source par des qualités incontestables et des trouvailles vraiment heureuses. Il en est de même dans mainte

¹ *Fastn.* 53.

² *Décam.* 1, 6.

autre pièce, comme *Der farendt Schüler mit dem Teuffelbannen*¹, *Ewlenspiegel mit dem plaben hostüech und dem paurn*², *Ewlenspiegel mit dem pelczwaschen*³ et combien d'autres.

Il faut reconnaître d'ailleurs que souvent les meilleures pièces de notre poète sont celles dont la source avait quelque valeur, celles dont les peintures plus vives, parlant davantage à son imagination, facilitaient son travail de dramaturge. Mais souvent la source n'est pour lui qu'un thème court, plat, succinct, qui donne l'idée du sujet et rien de plus. Notre poète doit alors faire tout le travail. Lisez par exemple le court récit de Pauli⁴ sur ce pauvre homme à qui personne ne veut donner asile, parce qu'il a la mauvaise habitude de toujours dire la vérité. Il y a là une vingtaine de lignes, peu intéressantes, fades, dont Hans Sachs a fait un petit drame allégorique charmant, alerte et très coloré.

Il est rare qu'il emprunte le canevas que lui offre son modèle sans y rien changer. L'idée générale lui suffit souvent; pour l'exécution, il s'abandonne à sa fantaisie. Ici il condense pour éviter des longueurs qui nuiraient à l'action; ailleurs il supprime maint trait qui ne lui convient pas ou qui parle peu à son imagination, enfin tout ce qui à la scène deviendrait superflu ou même d'un effet défectueux. Ainsi, nous aurons l'occasion de le voir plus loin, il n'hésite pas un instant à éliminer les motifs immoraux de son modèle, chaque fois que cela ne doit pas entraver la marche de la pièce; car ses farces doivent être, dit-il, « *glimpflich ân all unzucht* »⁵. Ou bien, ce sont des actions secondaires qui, si elles sont à leur place dans un récit, nuiraient à la netteté d'une pièce nécessairement courte et simple. Les situations, les coutumes diffèrent souvent dans les nouvelles d'origine étrangère qu'il a sous

¹ *Fastn.* 37.

² *Fastn.* 77.

³ *Fastn.* 72.

⁴ *Schimpf und Ernst* n° 3.

⁵ « Fasnachtspiel mancherley art, mit schimpflichen schwencken gespicket (doch glimpflich ohn all unzucht), die schwermütigen hertzen zu freuden ermundern » [Vorred in das dritt und letzt buch der Gedicht: Keller X, 7.]

les yeux: il supprime toujours ces éléments exotiques, sauf pourtant une fois, où l'action réclame une ville au bord de la mer¹. Il nous transporte alors exceptionnellement en Italie.

Mais il y a d'autres idées ou situations qui, sans être directement incompatibles avec le sujet tel que le désire Hans Sachs, ne peuvent pourtant pas être exploitées telles quelles. Ici encore, le poète fait œuvre personnelle: il transforme tout ce qu'il juge utile. Si l'action telle que la lui offre son modèle, lui semble insuffisamment motivée ou psychologiquement invraisemblable, il n'hésite pas devant les changements, changements de détails souvent, qui donneront plus de vérité à l'ensemble. Telle scène produira sous sa plume un plus grand effet, parce que plus vive, mieux adaptée, plus naturelle.

Loin d'accumuler des détails étrangers au sujet, il s'efforce, dans ces transformations, de garder à l'action une simplicité qui rend l'ensemble plus clair. Partout où cela est possible il augmente l'effet du *Fastnachtspiel*, en satisfaisant au plus haut point à la justice poétique, ce qui souvent sera d'une grande importance pour accuser la tendance morale de la pièce.

En vue de transposer son sujet dans une sphère plus intime, il transporte la scène en Allemagne, dans un lieu connu de ses auditeurs, et y ajoute, autant que possible, des détails tout germaniques, des éléments de la vie de tous les jours, tels que les connaissent les spectateurs auxquels il s'adresse. Comme nous l'avons vu déjà dans la farce *Der Ketzermeister*, il s'efforce aussi d'accentuer les traits comiques que lui fournit la source, et au besoin d'en imaginer de nouveaux.

Car notre poète ajoute souvent des idées nouvelles au modèle qu'il a sous les yeux; maintes fois avec bonheur, comme nous l'ont montré les farces du *Ketzermeister* et du *Kuhdieb*². Ce ne sont parfois que des détails; mais, typiques et bien choisis, ils donnent une toute autre valeur à la pièce³.

¹ *Fastn.* 23.

² *Fastn.* 25.

³ Cf. *Fastn.* 63 — *Fastn.* 62, etc.

C'est dans ces additions que notre poète montre surtout son talent. Ici il sait donner un peu plus d'ampleur aux situations qui à la scène auront un succès certain : ainsi l'évacuation du diable devient chez lui du plus haut comique¹.

Transportant son sujet d'un monde indéterminé dans une sphère connue, il y exprime la vie réelle telle qu'un observateur aussi fin que lui a pu la voir. Ces gens qu'il a eu tout loisir d'étudier autour de lui, il les fait agir et danser à sa guise, tel un joueur de marionnettes. Parfois même, oubliant son rôle, il quitte la coulisse et vient en personne jeter un coup d'œil sur la scène, pour voir ce qui s'y passe et souhaiter le bonsoir à l'aimable compagnie.

Très fin psychologue, il sait tirer parti de ses connaissances du cœur humain ; il peint à merveille les émotions de ses personnages et leur expression. Voyez cette paysanne¹ : n'est-ce pas par crainte du retour possible de son mari qu'elle se répète trois fois coup sur coup : « il ne reviendra pas de sitôt ! » Ne veut-elle pas se tranquilliser elle-même ? Ailleurs² le mari parle peu quand son épouse lui demande une preuve de sa fidélité ; c'est qu'il ne se sent pas très rassuré et a peur de se compromettre : « *Hastw dergleich gmerckt oder gsehen? — Nein, auff mein warheit mag ich jehen* » lui répond-elle, sans voir bien loin. Ces quelques mots suffisent à lui rendre tout son aplomb, et il se sentira fort pour lui jouer tout à l'heure une petite comédie de sa façon.

De même notre poète, soucieux de donner plus de vraisemblance à ses pièces, s'efforce de motiver les plus petits incidents qu'il représente. Ce n'est pas pour rien qu'Eulenspiegel se joue des paysannes³ ; il veut punir la curiosité de l'hôtesse ; c'est pour se venger de l'arrogance du curé que l'écolier nomade lui prépare un bon tour⁴. Tous ces traits sont à peine indiqués dans la source ; c'est le poète qui, avec un véritable sens dramatique, les accentue de lui-même.

¹ *Fastn.* 37.

² *Fastn.* 38.

³ *Fastn.* 72.

Il tient aussi à développer les situations comiques, puisque le but de ses farces est de faire rire. Aussi la colère du paysan à qui on a volé son drap, exprimée en trois mots par le modèle, donne lieu à toute une scène très amusante et même satirique¹. Il est rare d'ailleurs qu'il amplifie outre mesure ces développements, sentant mieux que personne quand il faut s'arrêter de rire.

C'est à lui aussi que nous devons les peintures caractéristiques des personnages au début des pièces: ces introductions sont souvent faites de main de maître. Quant à la morale qui vient s'exprimer à la fin, elle répond tellement à son caractère que personne ne songerait à en chercher l'origine dans son modèle. Non content de donner une direction moralisatrice à la pièce, nous verrons qu'il se laisse maintes fois entraîner un peu trop loin par son désir de donner des enseignements.

Comme le montre cette tendance didactique, si les changements que notre poète fait subir à son modèle sont souvent utiles et du meilleur effet, il en est parfois qui ne sont pas indispensables. Ainsi il faut bien avouer que la pièce *Der König Salomon*² mise en regard du récit de Boccace, ou *Der liederliche Mann*³ auprès du récit de Pauli, n'est pas supérieure à la source; et les changements y révèlent une main assez inhabile. D'autres fois, Hans Sachs néglige des traits dont il aurait pu tirer un excellent parti: ainsi le dialogue entre Calandrino et son voisin qui lui conseille de vendre son porc et de dire à sa femme qu'on le lui a dérobé, donne lieu chez Boccace à une scène très comique: l'avare se plaignant qu'on lui a volé son porc, le voisin lui répondra: vous l'avez vendu vous-même! Il est regrettable que Hans Sachs ait laissé échapper une scène qu'il aurait pu rendre très amusante⁴.

¹ *Fastn.* 77.

² *Fastn.* 26.

³ *Fastn.* 64.

⁴ Cf. de même *Fastn.* 58.

Il est assez rare pourtant que notre poète se montre inférieur à son modèle. Plus que par le fond, c'est surtout par la peinture des personnages qu'il le surpasse.

Remarquons tout d'abord que dans ses farces de Carnaval le nombre des personnages est toujours assez restreint. Si on excepte des pièces comme *Die verschwatzte Buhlschaft*¹ et *Die ungleichen Kinder Evae*² qui ont respectivement dix-sept et onze personnages, et les pièces à défilé, comme *Der Nasentanz*³ qui en a neuf, la plupart des *Fastnachtspiele* ne comptent pas plus de cinq ou six personnages. Pour la facilité de l'exécution comme pour la clarté de la pièce, qui ne doit pas être trop encombrée, notre poète aime bien simplifier dans ce sens. Chaque fois qu'il le peut, il supprime toutes les figures secondaires ou inutiles. Les douze aveugles de la source se réduisent chez lui à trois⁴; de même la longue suite du prélat⁵ est représentée par un seul serviteur; les enfants⁶ qui n'ont aucun rôle disparaissent tout à fait.

Il aime aussi à fondre plusieurs figures en une seule; ainsi Bruno, Buffalmacco et Nello de Boccace⁷ se retrouvent dans le seul personnage de Ulla Lapp qui les remplace tous trois. Cette concentration fréquente donne un caractère plus riche aux personnages; en même temps qu'ils prennent plus d'importance, ils perdent leur apparence effacée de figurants et deviennent des hommes de chair et d'os. De même pour exprimer plus de vie dans ses pièces, il attribue à une personne à peine mentionnée dans le modèle un rôle important. Introduite avec art, elle prend part à l'action et lui donne plus de mouvement.

Par contre il est plus rare de voir Hans Sachs créer un personnage de toutes pièces; mais s'il le fait, c'est toujours

¹ *Fastn.* 39.

² *Fastn.* 52.

³ *Fastn.* 20.

⁴ *Fastn.* 51.

⁵ *Fastn.* 27.

⁶ *Fastn.* 72.

⁷ *Fastn.* 62.

pour donner plus de couleur et de vie à son sujet. Ainsi la paysanne dans la pièce *Fraw Warheytt will niemandt herbergen*¹ ou le médecin dans *Der schwanger Pauer*² sont une source de mouvement et rendent les *Fastnachtspiele* supérieurs à leur modèle.

Qu'il condense, ajoute, ou emprunte ses personnages tels quels, Hans Sachs sait toujours, de main de maître, en faire des êtres humains réels et vivants. Tous les personnages prennent vie sous sa plume et montrent une individualité propre. Transformés par notre poète, les personnages du modèle perdent même leur nationalité; quel que soit l'auteur auxquels ils sont empruntés, tous deviennent des bourgeois de Nuremberg ou des manants des environs. C'est là une preuve du travail intérieur auquel Hans Sachs soumet toutes ses lectures: cette élaboration donne un cachet personnel à ses œuvres.

Dans les détails, Hans Sachs se montre aussi indépendant que lorsqu'il emprunte sujets ou personnages; mille exemples l'attestent. Ainsi, il n'hésite pas à transformer tout ce qui ne convient pas à son cadre ou à l'exécution sur la scène. Il aura ici beaucoup à faire, les récits généralement brefs qu'il emprunte ne pouvant guère s'arrêter à des traits secondaires ou à une longue caractéristique.

Est-il aussi libre dans la forme? Ça et là seulement on a eu l'occasion de retrouver des emprunts directs du texte; ce sont rarement des passages étendus, mais plutôt des phrases assez courtes ou des expressions qui, après lecture, peuvent s'être fixées dans la mémoire de notre poète; ce sont sans doute des réminiscences inconscientes. Si ces emprunts peuvent mettre sur la voie dans la recherche des sources, en tout cas, il sont peu fréquents.

Partout au contraire, la langue si caractéristique de notre poète apparaît avec un cachet particulier et original. Sa concision est parfois remarquable auprès de la longueur des phrases dans son modèle, particulièrement dans les traduc-

¹ *Fastn.* 24.

² *Fastn.* 16.

tions. Le choix de termes précis et expressifs peint avec netteté et vigueur. Le style rapide, alerte de toutes ces farces est bien celui de notre poète. Imitant le langage populaire, Hans Sachs aime à le colorer de mille proverbes, d'un grand nombre d'expressions particulières aux basses classes et d'un plus grand nombre encore d'injures et de gros mots, dont se saluent les gens de certains milieux. Combien de tours originaux, d'images réalistes et frappantes, de comparaisons colorées, qui caractérisent bien leur monde! Par contre il ne fait qu'un rare emploi de mots étrangers, le peuple ne les comprenant pas; ou bien il ne se sert que de ceux qui sont familiers à tout le monde.

Pour la même raison, il donnera le plus souvent à ses figures des noms allemands, parce qu'ils seront mieux compris. De cette façon il pourra même quelquefois y peindre le caractère particulier du personnage. (Kargas, Schleckmetz, etc.)

Un des moyens les plus propres à donner de la vie au drame, c'est d'animer le dialogue. Hans Sachs l'a bien compris, car le premier en Allemagne, il s'entend à entre couper les discours. Déjà dans une pièce qui n'est pas une des meilleures et dont la structure est encore bien primitive¹, le long récit des malheurs de Frau Wahrheit deviendrait bien vite ennuyeux à la scène. Hans Sachs le devinant, le coupe par les exclamations et les questions du paysan et de la paysanne. Ces interruptions sont encore maladroitement; mais, bien placées et ne manquant pas de naturel, elles donnent beaucoup plus de vivacité au récit, et éveillent l'intérêt. Si on ne peut dire qu'elles prouvent chez l'auteur un art consommé, du moins faut-il reconnaître qu'elles dénotent un instinct des nécessités scéniques et de la vie dans les discours.

On peut voir encore dans d'autres pièces les répliques venant interrompre vivement une phrase commencée. Les questions, les réparties vives contribuent à imprimer au dialogue un tour rapide qui est vraiment d'un très bon effet. Comme on est loin des interminables monologues du siècle précédent! Ceci encore est de notre poète.

¹ *Fastn.* 24.

Etant donnée l'énorme production de Hans Sachs, il est certes inévitable que çà et là, la transformation du récit en drame soit encore un peu extérieure, mécanique, si l'on peut dire. Ainsi *Der gross Eyferer*¹, *Das Weib im Brunnen*² ne montrent aucune originalité. Mais il est rare que Hans Sachs ne sache pas se détacher de son modèle. La comparaison de ses *Fastnachtspiele* avec leurs sources révèle assez clairement que notre poète possédait un talent réel et on est parfois étonné de voir avec quelle adresse il sait souvent utiliser les maigres indications du modèle, et le plier à ses besoins.

Loin d'être esclave de ceux qu'il imite, il montre un talent vraiment personnel, une originalité qui donne à ses œuvres un cachet tout particulier.

¹ *Fastn.* 45.

² *Fastn.* 46.

CHAPITRE IV

La Satire et la Société contemporaine

Esprit satirique de l'époque. — Nobles, bourgeois, paysans dans les *Fastnachtspiele* de Hans Sachs et dans la réalité. — Vie conjugale. — Clergé. — Satire religieuse. — Médecin. — Fripons: Marchand, Juif, Landsknecht, Raubritter, Ecolier nomade. — Caractère de cette satire. — Valeur documentaire des *Fastnachtspiele*.

Pendant cette période de la fin du Moyen âge, l'esprit allemand se signale par deux traits bien caractéristiques: d'une part une religieuse gravité, d'autre part un courant humoristique plein de jeunesse et de fraîcheur.

Cette veine humoristique, qui facilement se fait satirique, apparaît dans les créations de tous les arts. Beaucoup de gravures raillent en traits piquants, quelquefois en mordantes satires, les folies de l'époque. C'est la vanité féminine qui s'exprime dans l'amour des futilités et le choix des ajustements; ou la présomption ridicule des fats, qui croient être aimés et cherchent toujours à plaire. Mais la cible tout indiquée de ces railleries, c'est le paysan bouffi d'orgueil et ridicule dans ses vêtements de dimanche qui contrastent si fort avec ses manières grotesques. Les scènes de mœurs villageoises qui datent de cette époque sont nombreuses. Une des plus remarquables est une danse rustique, tracée par la main de Dürer sur le livre d'heures de Maximilien: la gaucherie de ce couple de paysans est des plus comiques.

Dans la sculpture règne le même courant: la satire y va souvent jusqu'à la trivialité. Partout la caricature grotesque s'étale avec tout un défilé d'animaux déguisés dont le sens satirique est évident et du plus burlesque effet. Les prédicateurs de la chaire, eux-mêmes, ne reculent pas devant tout un appareil de fantasmagorie facétieuse et triviale, pour frapper davantage les yeux et les oreilles des pécheurs. Le sermon, d'une liberté gaillarde souvent choquante, dépasse parfois l'indécence du théâtre.

Aussi ne faut-il pas s'étonner de rencontrer la même tendance humoristique et satirique dans la littérature et surtout dans les *Fastnachtspiele* de cette époque. Car s'il est un genre littéraire capable de donner une image de son temps, c'est bien la farce, qui, ayant pris naissance dans le peuple, faite pour le peuple, était aussi jouée par des gens du peuple. Les *Fastnachtspiele* de Hans Sachs, eux aussi, forment une vaste satire à cent actes divers. Comme le *Schwank*, ils racontent les incidents de la vie bourgeoise, les petits potins de quartier, les scandales et les médisances qui égayent la ville ou la paroisse aux dépens de celui-ci ou de celui-là.

Parcourons ensemble le monde aux aspects multiples, où se joue cette comédie humaine, et passons en revue toute la galerie satirique de Hans Sachs. Il nous emmène dans tous les milieux: noblesse, bourgeoisie, peuple. Voyons tout d'abord les nobles: à tout seigneur, tout honneur! Assez rares dans les pièces de notre poète, ils semblent pourtant tracés d'après nature. Le brigand de Boccace, Chino di Tacco¹, qui fait prisonnier un abbé à l'embonpoint exagéré, est devenu, sous la plume de Hans Sachs, un châtelain allemand, brigand de grand chemin, qui passe son temps à détrousser les voyageurs: figure vivante caractérisée avec vivacité et sincérité par ses deux serviteurs et acolytes Wurst-hans et Schrammfritz. Ce noble songe surtout à son intérêt, qu'il préfère à tous les devoirs de chevalerie; mais il ne manque pas d'esprit et c'est le trait qui le relève aux yeux de notre poète.

Que fait un noble? Il ne s'occupe que de questions futiles, chasse, s'amuse et opprime les malheureux paysans². Quand il n'est pas à guerroyer avec le hobereau voisin, il prépare des réceptions pompeuses et des banquets où la gourmandise ne perd pas ses droits.

Tous pourtant ne sont pas ainsi; il y a aussi parmi eux de braves gens, capables de pensées élevées. Tel châtelain reçoit la visite d'un ami, savant docteur, et se réjouit sin-

¹ *Fastn.* 27: *Das Wildbad.*

² *Fastn.* 15: *Das Krapfen holen.*

cèrement de pouvoir deviser avec lui¹; il nous dit simplement, naïvement (on croirait entendre parler Hans Sachs lui-même; peut-être d'ailleurs se dépeint-il à son insu), sa passion pour les bons livres et son désir de s'instruire toujours davantage:

Kein gröser frewd hab ich auf erd,
Den zu lesen die püecher werd,
Da ich deglich erfar das pest,
Das ich vor gar nit hab gewest,
Als ein lay und unglserter mon.

Fastn. 83: 169/173.

En somme, la satire de notre poète contre les nobles est bien douce, peut-être même trop indulgente. Est-ce parce que le noble n'est pas un type traditionnel de la comédie populaire? Peut-être; mais ce serait alors un manque d'imagination; et Hans Sachs n'en manque pas. Par contre, il n'a pas l'esprit frondeur, et c'est plutôt là, croyons-nous, la cause de sa réserve à leur égard. Hans Sachs rit de ses égaux, parce qu'il les voit autour de lui et qu'ils sont semblables à lui. Mais, malgré sa liberté d'esprit², jamais il ne s'attaque aux puissances établies; car il ne veut pas troubler l'ordre public. De même nous verrons plus loin qu'il raille les moines, les prêtres, etc.; mais jamais il ne s'en prendra aux évêques ou au pape. Malgré tout il respecte en eux la fonction, la dignité dont ils sont investis, en un mot l'autorité³. De même les femmes de condition chez Hans Sachs sont sympathiques: bonnes, honnêtes, sages, désintéressées⁴, elles ne sont jamais la cible de ses railleries comme les femmes du peuple, car elles ont plus de prestige.

Plus nombreuses sont les peintures empruntées à la bourgeoisie des villes. Rares dans les anciens *Fastnachtspiele*, qui puisaient presque exclusivement leurs sujets dans les classes populaires, elles deviennent assez fréquentes chez

¹ *Fastn.* 83.

² Cf. *Fastn.* 15. Evidemment, lorsque ses sentiments s'accordent avec le devoir patriotique, rien ne le retient plus; sa satire devient violente, animée du souffle de la passion, comme par exemple, contre le Margrave de Brandebourg, Alcibiades.

³ *Fastn.* 27: 66/9.

⁴ Cf. *Fastn.* 61. *Fastn.* 35.

Hans Sachs, qui se proposait de donner de son siècle une image aussi fidèle et aussi complète que possible. Là notre poète trace, avec un petit nombre de traits caractéristiques, des esquisses sincères et vivantes de la vie bourgeoise, telle qu'il l'a connue lui-même. Les pièces *Von der unglückhafften verschwatzten Bulschafft*¹ et *Der unersetlich Geitzhunger*² témoignent d'une connaissance profonde de ce milieu.

Le bourgeois est vaniteux; il se croit, par essence, supérieur au paysan, qu'il regarde de haut et avec qui il ne veut rien avoir de commun. Il ne lui cache pas son mépris et le tient à l'écart, tandis qu'il cherche à se rapprocher des nobles, dont la fréquentation le flatte. Bouffi d'orgueil, il craint le travail, qui le déshonorerait, boit volontiers, joue pour passer le temps et donne tous ses soins à de vaines questions de toilette. Par sa sottise il est d'ailleurs la risée de ses semblables et celle du spectateur.

Mais la cible la plus fréquente de la verve railleuse de notre poète, c'est le paysan; car par ses ridicules il donne prise, plus que personne, à la satire. Ici Hans Sachs suit la tradition de Nuremberg. Dans les nombreuses pièces qui raillent les paysans, on ne trouve aucune trace de l'idée plus haute que se font, par exemple, les Suisses de la classe populaire.

Hans Sachs nous les présente comme des rustres, des lourdauds que rien n'a pu polir. Grossièreté, stupidité et malhonnêteté, tel est l'assemblage qui forme le paysan. Grossier, il l'est dans tous ses faits et gestes, dans ses manières, son langage et jusque dans ses idées. D'ailleurs fainéant, orgueilleux, d'une vanité souvent grotesque, il aime à lever le coude et rentre plus d'une fois chez lui en titubant. Oublieux de la fidélité qu'il doit à son épouse, il s'expose à une pénitence publique bien méritée. Sa rapacité le désigne à la malice des voisins. Mais ce qui le distingue par-dessus tout, c'est sa stupidité légendaire. Voici un paysan qui croit qu'il

¹ *Fastn.* 39.

² *Fastn.* 32.

est en mal d'enfant¹; c'est un paysan encore qui est assez niais pour aider un fripon à lui dérober sa propre vache: il se charge même de la vendre pour lui à la foire aux meilleures conditions possibles². Celui-ci, dévoré par une jalousie injustifiée envers son épouse, est envoyé pendant un mois au Purgatoire et revient raconter aux autres villageois, aussi crédules que lui, les souffrances qu'il y a endurées³. Celui-là, arrivant à l'improviste, a surpris sa femme dans les bras du curé; mais une voisine obligeante se charge de lui faire croire qu'il a vu double, et elle le convainc bientôt⁴. Un autre encore croit, sur les affirmations du médecin, qu'il est gros d'un poulain, bien qu'il ne puisse s'expliquer l'affaire⁵. Les paysans de Fünsing sont célèbres par leur sottise; mais la palme revient sans conteste à ce paysan⁶, qu'on a vu, à la façon des poules, couvrir des fromages, persuadé qu'il va faire éclore de jeunes veaux, et dont on ne peut tirer, pendant cette besogne, autre chose que des gloussements.

Quant aux femmes, elles sont, à ce point de vue, dignes de leur mari. Les unes livrent en toute confiance leurs fourrures au malin Eulenspiegel, croyant, sur ses affirmations que, grâce à un art connu de lui seul, elles deviendront aussi blanches que du lait⁷. Une autre envoie à son mari, au Paradis, des vêtements et tout son pécule pour qu'il ne manque de rien⁸. Partout elles donnent mainte preuve de leur simplicité sans égale. Décidément, il faut avouer que les malins ont beau jeu et qu'il n'est pas difficile de duper de tels sots.

Pourtant ils ne sont pas assez niais pour oublier tout à fait leurs intérêts, et presque toujours leur sottise se double de malhonnêteté. Les paysans de Fünsing⁹ se volent l'un l'autre et n'ont rien à envier au brigand qu'ils ont pris.

¹ *Fastn.* 16.

² *Fastn.* 25.

³ *Fastn.* 42.

⁴ *Fastn.* 54.

⁵ *Fastn.* 80.

⁶ *Fastn.* 34.

⁷ *Fastn.* 72.

⁸ *Fastn.* 22.

Fastn. 59.

Grampas avouera ingénument qu'on ne peut gagner tout son bien honnêtement¹. Tel autre perd sa vache, mais trompe son voleur, et nous confesse qu'au fond l'un ne vaut pas mieux que l'autre:

Wir sindt zwar all drey nit vast bider,
Es ist der wirt gleych wie die gest,
Es sint die vögel wie das nest.

Fastn. 25: 320/323.

Il est vrai qu'il leur faudrait du mérite pour rester honnêtes: tyrannisés par le seigneur qui foule leurs récoltes et incendie leurs granges en chassant et en guerroyant, ils sont souvent fort malheureux; leur sort est misérable et rude. Traités comme des animaux, ils mènent une vie de brutes; séparés les uns des autres pour se plier aux exigences de leurs maîtres, ils habitent une humble hutte, se nourrissent généralement de peu: pain bis, bouillie d'avoine et légumes cuits, et boivent de l'eau ou du lait. Pour tout gibier ils tuent un ou deux porcs chaque année. Tandis que le bourgeois porte des vêtements de velours et de coûteuses fourrures², le paysan va tout maculé et rapiécé comme un malheureux. Même ses habits des jours de fête sont de toile grossière; il n'en a pas de meilleurs pour aller à la noce.

Les paysans travaillent toute la semaine. Leurs distractions sont peu nombreuses, en dehors des grandes réjouissances de l'année, qui sont plus fêtées dans les campagnes qu'à la ville, déjà blasée. La journée de labeur terminée, les femmes et les jeunes filles se réunissent dans une maison amie pour filer en devisant; les jeunes gens se rendent souvent aussi à ces réunions, que Hans Sachs nous a dépeintes dans la pièce intitulée *Die Rockenstuben*³, où les langues tournent plus que les rouets.

¹ *Fastn.* 21: 99.

² « Marder rücken, guelden hauben ». *Fastn.* 15: 190.

³ *Fastn.* 10.

Da ess wir huzl und höllern rueben,
Die maid in die sackpfeiffen singen,
Da unser knecht ölpern und ringen,
Eins tails die karten in die nües,
Ein tails des rüepfleins auf dem kües,
Der plintmeus stocks und öll ausschlagen
Ains tails den maidn abschuettent agen.
Ist das nit auch ein frolichs leben?

Fastn. 15: 247/281.

Le dimanche on danse en plein air au son d'une cornemuse¹. Ou bien les paysans vont au tir à la *Hallerwiese*; cela ressemble d'ailleurs plutôt à des exercices de tir qu'à une fête. Il y avait néanmoins des prix que les meilleurs tireurs se voyaient décerner.

Mais le plus souvent, opprimés toute la semaine, leurs instincts ne s'en montrent que plus violents aux jours de fête ou de repos; et vous les voyez alors s'adonner à l'ivrognerie ou à la folie du jeu: deux fléaux qui sévissaient à cette époque et qui, bouleversant les conditions, amènent des perturbations dans l'ordre public. Dans chaque ville, le Conseil fait paraître décret sur décret contre le démon du jeu. Aussi sera-ce là un des thèmes favoris des prédicateurs de la chaire comme des moralistes du temps².

Malgré sa vie simple, le vilain est plein d'orgueil et s'efforce d'égaliser les classes supérieures. Le bourgeois en fait autant. C'est là une caractéristique de l'époque: chacun méprise la classe voisine et en est l'ennemi juré; il met tout son honneur à essayer d'imiter les manières et le genre de vie de ceux qui sont à l'échelon supérieur et qu'il jalouse. L'éternelle lutte entre les différents états est parfois particulièrement acharnée, comme pendant la période qui nous intéresse, celle de la Réforme. Notre poète nous montre dans une de ses pièces³ avec quelle aprêtée, avec quelle haine violente luttent paysans et nobles. Ils ne méditent que vengeances terribles les uns contre les autres; les paysans reviennent souvent de ces luttes sans merci, estropiés pour leur vie: celui-ci a le dos ouvert et porte un bras en écharpe; celui-là a perdu une mâchoire et est tonsuré jusqu'aux os du crâne; un autre encore marche sur deux béquilles et a deux grandes entailles derrière la tête. Mais ils chercheront bientôt à se venger d'autre manière!

Si le paysan hait ces nobles pour qui il peine et qu'il voit se divertir à ses dépens, l'ouvrier à son tour méprise et dé-

¹ *Fastn.* 15: 230/234.

² *Fastn.* 5: 466/469; 6: 83/87; 15: 253/257.

³ *Fastn.* 75: *Der Neidhart mit dem feyhel.*

teste le paysan; le marchand, l'ouvrier; et le paysan le marchand. Mais personne ne veut rester dans sa condition. C'est une course ascendante sans fin; et notre poète n'a pas tort de rappeler à chacun qu'il devrait rester dans sa sphère:

Ein jeglicher nach seinem standt
Halt jnnen beide mundt und handt,
Das er nit mehr hie thu verzern
Denn jm sein pfluge mag ernern.

Fastn. 50: 326/329.

Dans les classes inférieures, beaucoup prennent modèle sur les classes élevées: ouvriers et paysans, valets et filles de ferme veulent égaler les riches; ils dépensent tout leur argent en vêtements et en parures coûteuses et font la roue autant que nobles ou grandes dames. Bien d'autres que Hans Sachs déplorent ce mal qui gagne peu à peu tous les milieux à cette époque. L'amour du luxe est certes un des fléaux qui désolent le plus tous les états; il gagne tout le monde, à la ville comme à la campagne¹. Que de fois notre poète s'élèvera contre cette sottise qui mène les plus riches à leur perte! « Que chacun règle ses dépenses sur ses revenus » ne cesse-t-il de répéter avec une sagesse que beaucoup ne savent entendre:

(Jeder) mach sein rechnung altag,
Das die zerung nit ubertreff
Sein gwin...

Fastn. 50: 331/333.

La corruption générale, l'amour du luxe semblent avoir eu pour premier résultat la ruine de nombreuses familles. Combien d'intérieurs misérables notre poète nous fait-il voir dans ses farces de Carnaval! Ici les enfants vont nu-pieds; il n'y a plus d'argent pour payer le loyer dont l'échéance approche. Peu à peu, on a dû vendre la vache, les porcs, toute la basse-cour, et, dans beaucoup de maisons, il ne reste plus qu'un chat maigre et pelé: *Die kaz ist schir das pest siech worden*. Les rares biens immobiliers sont donnés en gages. Entrons avec notre poète chez ce paysan; tous les coins sont vides, les meubles rares, les ustensiles de ménage rouillés et en mauvais état; la literie n'est que foin et paille;

¹ *Fastn. 15: 189/190.*

plus d'une chaise est boiteuse. Tout révèle un dénûment complet: dame Pauvreté a élu domicile en ce logis. Le brigand qui s'y glisse à l'improviste est bien embarrassé, ne trouvant rien à dérober qu'une vieille vache efflanquée¹. Et combien d'intérieurs semblables! Le peu qui reste à la maison devient la proie des rats et des souris².

Ainsi Hans Sachs choisit ses personnages dans toutes les classes sociales. Semblable au Diable boiteux, il jette un regard dans chaque maison, pour voir si tout est en ordre et pour railler toutes les anomalies. Et au milieu de toutes ses railleries même exagérées, on trouve un fond vrai, une merveilleuse connaissance des différentes couches de la société.

Nous avons vu que le thème favori de Hans Sachs, ce sont les joies de la vie conjugale, question des plus agitées pendant tout le xvi^e siècle. Comme dans les fabliaux ou dans les *Schwänke* de la fin du Moyen âge, les rapports entre mari et femme sont généralement des plus tendus et présentés d'une manière comique. Chacun veut être maître; et on assiste fréquemment à la lutte acharnée que se livrent les deux époux pour la « braie », symbole de domination dans le ménage.

L'homme craint son dragon domestique comme la peste, ce qui ne nous étonne pas, dès que nous l'apercevons, même de loin. Jamais satisfaite, elle est toujours en train de grogner; querelleuse, d'humeur batailleuse et d'un entêtement irréductible, on ne sait vraiment comment l'aborder. Sa curiosité lui attire bien des désagréments, mais elle est incorrigible. Bavarde toujours et paresseuse, elle délaisse son intérieur pour deviser au coin des rues avec d'autres commères. A la maison, elle s'occupe surtout de toilette et fait bonne chère en l'absence du mari, utilisant à cela l'argent qu'elle a su lui dérober. Elle aime à vider les bouteilles, et son mari en a honte, quand ils sont ensemble au cabaret.

¹ *Fastn.* 25: 83/85.

² *Fastn.* 60: 238/242.

Mais ce ne sont là que péchés mignons. La femme est un véritable monstre de perversité. Bien rares sont celles qui restent fidèles à leur époux; toutes se moquent et se jouent de lui, et avec quelle désinvolture! Elles ont un fonds commun de ruse et d'effronterie, allié à une fertilité d'imagination vraiment remarquable, quand il s'agit de cacher leur mauvaise conduite sous des apparences honnêtes. Les mensonges ne leur coûtent pas, pour aveugler leur malheureux époux, *ihn mit gsehenden Augen blenden*. D'ailleurs tromper leur est chose facile; c'est un art qu'elles apprennent dès l'âge le plus tendre et qui se transmet de mère en fille à travers les générations.

Voyons-les à l'œuvre, ces démons enjuponnés. Celle-ci est une vraie furie¹; il faut que tout lui obéisse dans la maison: c'est elle qui fait la loi aux servantes, aux ouvriers de son mari et à son mari lui-même. Et qu'ils ne s'avisent pas de lui résister; car elle se bat volontiers contre eux tous réunis, et, grâce à sa méchanceté, les amène bien vite à composition. Son mari ose-t-il dire un mot? elle le met dehors après une magistrale correction, et, pour le calmer, lui envoie par la fenêtre une douche glacée sur la tête². Aussi le malheureux n'a-t-il qu'à filer doux, *Süssholz ins Maul nehmen*, mais il regrette bien de s'être ainsi mis la corde au cou: « Mieux vaudrait avoir la fièvre quarte, celle-ci du moins s'apaise par moments »³.

Aussi les pères de famille ne peuvent-ils comprendre ce jeune paysan inexpérimenté qui s'était mis en tête d'avoir deux femmes⁴. Le malheureux, dès son mariage avec la première, comprend combien grande fut son erreur: harcelé à tout moment par sa moitié, une véritable harpie, il s'aperçoit

¹ *Fastn.* 4.

² *Fastn.* 28.

³ Derhalb wer mir nützer und lieber,
Das ich het das vierteglich fieber,
Het ich etwan ein guten tag;
Aber bei meinem weyb ich mag
Haben gar kein gerute stundt.

Fastn. 28: 13/17.

⁴ *Fastn.* 36.

bientôt qu'il en a trop d'une seule, et offre au père tout ce qu'il voudra, s'il consent à reprendre sa fille, pire que tous les lions et tous les dragons réunis:

Besser sey bey löbn und trachen,
Denn bey eim bösen weyb zu wachen.

F. 49: 63/64.

Et il n'est pas le seul! Un dicton nurembergeois nous raconte qu'il était promis une prime des plus alléchantes, un rôti, à celui qui pourrait prouver qu'il ne se laissait pas dominer par sa moitié¹. Il y a bien deux cents ans déjà que la récompense attend là, mais personne ne vient la chercher, et pour cause!

Cependant, soumis à un tel régime, l'homme le plus doux finit par perdre patience, et, encouragé par le roi Salomon, il invoque quelquefois Saint Gourdin (*S^t Kolbmann*) ou a recours à des herbes précieuses, comme la giroflée à cinq feuilles (*Fünffingerkraut*) qui ne tardent pas à produire l'effet désiré. Et il a raison, car les femmes sont si mauvaises que, « quand elles ne méritent pas les coups qu'on leur donne, elles les méritent tout de même² ».

La jeune fille ne vaut guère mieux; pourtant elle est tout miel auprès de ce qu'elle deviendra avec les années. La vieille femme est d'une laideur physique et morale repoussante; paresseuse, rusée, fourbe, elle a tous les vices, et avec des airs de sainte Nitouche, tire ses ressources d'un métier peu avouable mais souvent fructueux. « *Hexe* » ou « *Kupplerin* », elle est pire mille fois que le diable, qui a peur de sa perfidie³, et si vicieuse que c'est à elle que s'adresse le prince des enfers, s'il veut mener à bonne fin les tours qu'il joue aux humains⁴.

Hans Sachs accumule sur la tête de la femme tous les traits de noirceur dont il dispose, pour en faire une peinture repoussante. Mais s'il exagère d'une façon aussi humoristique, c'est pour obtenir des effets d'opposition. Par ailleurs, il sait reconnaître et glorifier les qualités précieuses de la bonne

¹ *Fastn.* 12.

² *Fastn.* 82: 311/312.

³ *Fastn.* 76.

⁴ *Fastn.* 18.

épouse, le plus beau trésor qui puisse être accordé à l'homme. La femme n'est plus alors cette fille d'Ève qui a perdu le genre humain, elle est la compagne douce et fidèle, qui console et toujours conseille avec sagesse. Si cette tendre épouse disparaît presque complètement chez notre poète derrière les mégères beaucoup plus nombreuses, c'est pour des raisons comiques, et parce que la tradition le veut ainsi, non parce qu'il est persuadé que toutes ont le diable au corps.

Et l'homme, le mari de ces démons, est-il un ange de douceur? Par contraste, Hans Sachs en fait un malheureux, digne de pitié, doux, timide, d'une indulgence qui va souvent jusqu'à la lâcheté. Faut-il lui en vouloir si parfois il perd patience? Mais souvent l'un ne vaut pas mieux que l'autre:

Mein fraw bricht häfn, so brich ich krüg.
Und wo ich anderst redt, ich lüg.

Fastn. 38: 243/244.

avoue le mari. Bien qu'il ne soit pas, comme la femme, la cible permanente des railleries de notre poète, il a bien aussi sa part de travers. Le jeune homme se laisse facilement entraîner et porte déjà en germe tous les défauts de l'homme mûr: orgueilleux, d'une avarice sordide ou d'une prodigalité qui ne connaît pas de bornes, il ne sait garder un juste milieu; il passe son temps à jouer aux cartes ou aux dés, à boire tout son avoir, ou à courir les filles du pays. Devenu homme, toutes ces belles dispositions ne font que croître et embellir: paresseux, ivrogne invétéré, joueur, coureur de femmes, jaloux, il est le digne pendant de son aimable épouse.

On devine aisément quel tableau réjouissant offre l'intérieur d'un tel ménage. Tandis que chacun fait poche à gauche pour satisfaire ses passions, pendant que l'un boit et que l'autre joue, et que tous deux passent leur temps en aventures galantes, la misère arrive à grands pas; bientôt il leur faudra mendier leur pain¹. Et, tels les chevaux, quand

¹ Verpfent ist schir all unser hab,
Mit unsrem zancken wirt zw lest
Der petel ordn der aller pest.

Fastn. 12: 304/306.

il n'y a rien au râtelier, les époux se battent. C'est alors un véritable amusement pour les voisins que d'assister à la bataille en règle qu'ils se livrent et que notre poète n'hésite pas à dépeindre dans tout son réalisme. On les voit « se houspiller, se chamailler, se traîner par la chambre, s'arracher les habits, se plumer le toupet à faire voler les cheveux partout ! Chacun a le dessus, puis le dessous alternativement. Comme la femme étrille le mari ! ne dirait-on pas que les chats l'ont peigné ? De ses griffes, de ses ongles, elle lui carde la barbe et finalement lui mord l'oreille. Et le mari, quelle belle volée de bois vert il lui administre à son tour ! Elle en a les yeux noirs et bleus ; tous les deux ont le nez et la bouche en sang¹ ».

Bel intérieur vraiment, tableau bien peu engageant pour les jeunes gens qui n'ont pas encore convolé ! La mauvaise conduite des femmes, leur langue de vipère, leur manie de vouloir toujours avoir raison, en même temps que leur susceptibilité ombrageuse, l'imbécillité des paysans, quelquefois Normands, les « tontons » qui se laissent mener par le bout du nez, abandonnant le gouvernement à Doctor Sieman, ne rappellent-ils pas le genre de tableaux que nous offrent les comédies d'Aristophane, pleines aussi de ces chamailles du plus haut comique ?

De telles descriptions peuvent surprendre chez notre poète, qui, d'autre part ne se lasse pas de recommander et

¹ Wie hat das ehvolck gmacht ein hauffen
Mit reissen, zerren, schlagen, rauffen,
Das die haar in der stub umbfliegen!
Ein jedes thet ein weyl obligen.
Wie hat sie den mann thun zerkratzen,
Als haben jm gestrält die katzen!
Wie hats jn zerkrält und zerrissen.
Und hat jm auch ein ohr abbissen!
Wie hats jm dann sein bart erzaust!
Er hat jr mit eim brügel glaust,
Das umb die augn ist blaw und schwartz.

.....
Es blut jn beyden münd und nasen.

Fastn. 18: 204/217.

Nous empruntons cette traduction à M. Charles Schweitzer, *loc. cit.*, p. 223.

de glorifier la vie de famille, qui a lui-même chanté de si touchante façon le bonheur qu'il avait goûté auprès de dame Cunégonde, et qui, après la mort de celle-ci, n'hésita pas, vieillard de soixante-sept ans, à choisir une nouvelle épouse. Comment a-t-il pu prendre plaisir à peindre avec des couleurs aussi crues le bonheur qui naît de l'hymen? Est-ce à dire que les ménages unis étaient particulièrement rares du temps de Hans Sachs? S'il flétrit souvent l'impureté, chez l'homme comme chez la femme¹, faut-il croire à l'inconduite générale des époux de son temps? Sébastien Brant, lui aussi, déplore cette immoralité: *Ehebrechen wägt man als gering*. Cependant nous ne croyons pas qu'il faille prendre leurs paroles à la lettre. Evidemment l'adultère n'était pas rare au Moyen âge; mais il n'était sans doute pas plus fréquent que de nos jours, et les ménages d'alors n'ont pas dû être beaucoup plus malheureux ni plus heureux qu'ils ne le sont aujourd'hui. On trouve bien çà et là dans les Chroniques quelques exemples d'adultère, mais bien rarement. Prédicateurs, moralistes et satiriques n'exagèrent-ils pas toujours un peu? Faut-il croire pour cela à la corruption des mœurs de toutes les nations chrétiennes à cette époque? Non, Français, Anglais, Germains, Italiens, Espagnols n'étaient peut-être pas particulièrement avilis; mais il se peut que, en même temps que les nécessités comiques, l'influence de la tradition comique se soit fait sentir dans les farces de notre poète comme dans toutes les pièces analogues du Moyen âge, et que ce soit le déclin de la culture antique avec son immoralité que nous trouvons là.

Ne se peut-il pas aussi que Hans Sachs, avec sa bonhomie naïve, ait pris un malin plaisir à tracer ces tableaux satiriques et à exercer sa verve railleuse aux dépens des douces filles d'Ève? Et la preuve qu'il agit ainsi, pour s'amuser et pour divertir les autres, c'est qu'il reconnaît parfois qu'il existe de bons ménages et de braves mères de famille; et de temps à autre il saura broser quelque tableau

¹ Cf. *Fastn.* 65, 69, 74, 54.

reposant d'une famille unie¹. Aussi peut-on affirmer que malgré ses puissantes satires, il prend place dans la littérature du xvi^e siècle à côté de Luther, dans le clan de ceux qui préconisent le mariage et croient à sa sainteté.

Pourtant si le poète exagère un peu la vérité pour noircir à plaisir les époux nurembergeois, il laisse échapper des détails vrais très curieux et pleins d'intérêt historique. Notons-en le pittoresque en passant.

Telle femme, qui s'est permis de battre son époux, devra faire le tour de la ville, à califourchon sur un âne, tournée à l'envers et le tenant par la queue (*Der Eselritt*)², suivie bien entendu de tous les gamins du pays qui ne lui épargnent pas les quolibets. A-t-elle trompé son mari, ce sera une autre procession symbolique: accompagnée du tambour, elle ira jusqu'aux portes de la ville, portant au cou de lourdes pierres, les *Schandsteine*, qui la désignent au mépris public³. Les entremetteuses aussi se méfient de la police; car si elles se font prendre, vite on les chasse de la ville, après les avoir punies de même manière. Recommencent-elles, on les stigmatisera d'un fer chaud⁴, ainsi que l'épouse infidèle; ou bien on leur coupera les oreilles⁵. L'adultère incorrigible, la sorcière seront enterrées vivantes, brûlées vives ou noyées dans un sac, avec de lourdes pierres au cou⁶.

Bien que mentionnés moins fréquemment, les hommes aussi reçoivent le châtiment de leurs fautes: le curé condamne

¹ Cf. *Fastn.* 51: 72. *Fastn.* 18: 52/62. *Fastn.* 52: 50/53, 83/85. *Fastn.* 56: 19/23.

² Il peut être intéressant de noter une coutume analogue en France, encore au commencement du XVIII^e siècle.

Cf. PETIT DE JULLEVILLE: *Les Comédiens en France au Moyen âge*, p. 206 et 207.

Cf. Claude NOIROT: *L'origine des Masques*, 1609 (collection Leber, t. IX), et DV CANGE: *Glossaire: Asini caudam in manu tenere*.

³ Ey, so hastw dragen das ploch,
Da dir der leb die drumel schlueg
Und mit dir umb den marck rum zueg
Da loffen wol hundert pueben mit.

Fastn. 19: 222/225.

⁴ *Fastn.* 19: 228.

⁵ *Fastn.* 19: 220/221. *Fastn.* 21: 139/141.

⁶ *Fastn.* 61: 374/379.

les adultères à porter la croix (*Das eprecher creucz*) autour de l'église le dimanche¹.

Dans cette peinture satirique, le clergé ne peut certes être oublié. Aussi verrons-nous souvent apparaître des curés de village dans les farces de Carnaval de notre poète. Cependant on est quelque peu surpris de voir quelle place réduite la satire religieuse proprement dite tient dans ce théâtre comique.

En Angleterre, on voit Heywood porter à la scène, dès le début du XVI^e siècle, des pièces comme *The four P. P.* ou *John, Tyb and Sir John*, dont la tendance satirique contre le clergé et les vendeurs d'indulgence n'est pas déguisée. Plus près de notre poète, Gengenbach fait représenter en 1517 *Der Nollhart*, l'année suivante *Klag über die Totenfresser*, satires virulentes contre le clergé et l'Eglise même. Niclas Manuel le suit dans la même voie avec les comédies *Vom Bapst und seiner Priesterschaft* (1522) et *Der Ablasskrämer* (1525). Il est surprenant que le siècle de la Réforme n'ait pas inspiré de pièce de tendance analogue à notre poète, qui a suivi et vécu les mouvements du temps de toute son âme. N'avait-il pas déjà vibré avec tout Nuremberg au signal de combat de Wittemberg? N'avait-il pas lui-même fait entendre, dès 1523, son chant de victoire *Die wittembergisch Nachtigall*, où il montre vraiment qu'il sait parler aux cœurs et se faire entendre du peuple? Puis, coup sur coup, prouvant quelle large part il prend aux questions qui troublent son époque, il publie quelques dialogues, de petits chefs-d'œuvre dont trois traitent des questions religieuses passionnantes d'actualité².

¹ Da pewt ich dir: auf den süntag
Das eprecher creüz umb kirchn trag,
Das idermon mit wert beweist,
Und das dw ein eprecher seist
Und hast ein panckhart zw eim sün.

Fastn. 65: 259/263.

² 1° « Disputation zwischen einem chorherrn und schumacher, darin das wort Gottes und ein recht christlich Wesen verfochten wirt. » 1524.

2° « Ein gesprech von den scheinwerken der geistlichen

C'est lui aussi qui collabore trois ans plus tard, en 1527, avec le prédicateur de Saint-Laurent, Andreas Osiander, à une satire illustrée contre la Papauté: *Une étrange prophétie touchant la papauté et le sort qui l'attend jusqu'à la fin du monde*¹.

Comment se fait-il que Hans Sachs, si actif, si véhément ailleurs, soit si discret dans ses farces de Carnaval, pourtant écrites pour le peuple, qui, on le sait, se passionnait au plus haut point pour ces questions? C'est sans doute justement à sa publication contre la papauté que nous devons cette réserve. Le conseil, en effet, s'empessa de faire saisir la prophétie et adressa à notre poète un blâme sévère, lui ordonnant de s'occuper de son métier de cordonnier et de s'abstenir dorénavant de publier de tels livres ou rimes². Ce blâme rendit notre poète plus prudent à l'avenir, et lui fit choisir ses sujets avec une certaine circonspection. Car nous savons que dans la suite Hans Sachs jouissait de la faveur du Conseil nurembergeois dont il avait su recouvrer la confiance, et les autorités, si sévères pour tout ce qui touchait les questions actuelles, n'ont jamais eu à refuser à notre poète la permission de jouer ses farces. Nous regrettons fort aujourd'hui la sévérité excessive du Conseil de Nuremberg qui a tari la source de quelques satires ; elles auraient pour nous un intérêt capital aujourd'hui.

C'est pour la même raison qu'il n'y a pas trace de satire politique dans les *Fastnachtspiele* de Hans Sachs, tandis qu'ailleurs il se révèle excellent patriote et prend une part

und iren gelübden, damit sie zu verlesterung des bluts Christi vermeinen selig zu werden. » 1524.

3° « Ein gesprech eines evangelischen christen mit einem lutherischen, darin der ergerlich wandel etlicher, die sich lutherisch nennen, angezeigt und brüderlich gestraft wirt. » 1524.

¹ *Eyn wunderliche weyssagung von dem Bapstumb, wie es yhm bisz an das endt der welt gehn sol.* 1527.

² « Dass er seines Handwercks und Schumachens warte, sich auch in Zukunft enthalte, solche Büchlein oder Reime ausgehen zu lassen. Ein ehrbarer Rat würde sonst seiner Notdurft nach gegen ihn handeln. Um diese geübte Handlung aber, wolle er die Strafe für dieses mal bei sich behalten, doch mit einer offenen Hand, sie nach ihrer Gelegenheit vorzunehmen. »

active aux événements politiques de l'époque, avec ses pamphlets directs ou déguisés contre le margrave¹ ou bien dans l'*Artlich Gespräch der Götter, die Zwietracht des römischen Reichs betreffend*. Il mentionne bien dans son registre une pièce intitulée *reichstags dewtschlands*², dont le sujet devait être politique; mais par prudence, il ne l'a sans doute jamais fait imprimer; en tout cas, elle ne nous est pas parvenue.

Mais revenons aux questions religieuses. Dans les farces, excepté une fois, toute la satire religieuse se réduit à la raillerie des gens d'Eglise.

Les prêtres sont, avec les femmes, les personnages que Hans Sachs charge le plus volontiers. Il y a cependant une nuance. Nous avons vu qu'il y a dans sa galerie féminine de braves femmes; nous ne trouvons pas de prêtre irréprochable. Au contraire, partout où il le peut, le poète leur décoche ses traits impitoyables; s'il peint un jour un ecclésiastique dans un beau rôle, il n'oublie pas, avec quelques touches bien noires, de mettre des taches au tableau³.

Voyez ce prêtre de campagne: il est laid, bossu, boiteux; tout son extérieur est repoussant, et, notre malin poète nous en avertit aimablement, tout à fait conforme à sa mentalité. Ajoutons d'ailleurs que Hans Sachs ne lui prête cette laideur physique que pour mieux faire ressortir le ridicule de sa conduite; notamment quand le curé, oubliant ses vœux, recherche la faveur des femmes⁴, ou se laisse prendre en faute par le mari trompé⁵. Paresseux, gourmand, ivrogne, avare, il met tout son art à se cacher pour avoir l'air d'un vrai Saint Jean-Baptiste. Mieux que personne, il s'entend à flatter et à tromper; il ne garde pas le secret des confessions⁶; hypocrite sans égal, il est partout l'indésirable⁷ et on le compare sou-

¹ « Gespräch von der Himmelfahrt Albrechts », anno 1557.

² *Fastn.* n° 48.

³ *Fastn.* 42.

⁴ *Fastn.* 37.

⁵ *Fastn.* 54.

⁶ *Fastn.* 58.

⁷ « Den schmaichler, gleisner und den hewchler,
Den dueckischen, hemischen meuchler;
Ein poes krawt über alle krewter. » *Fastn.* 13: 211/213.

vent à une immonde vermine¹. Il est pire que le mendiant et le voleur de métier. Ne va-t-il pas même jusqu'à vendre contre telle ou telle calamité des talismans qu'il sait sans aucune vertu? Il est d'une ignorance crasse, n'a pas la moindre idée de sa mission et n'a du prêtre que l'habit. Il oublie Dieu pour les femmes, et son impureté est légendaire: nul n'ignore qu'il a « sa cuisinière », souvent même des enfants.

Vous passez près du monastère; le moine va de long en large, lisant son bréviaire, ou du moins vous le croyez. Mais détrompez-vous: il guette telle entremetteuse qui doit venir lui indiquer l'heure et le lieu du prochain rendez-vous². Il avoue son inconduite avec un cynisme répugnant et croit faire assez en disant le matin une messe qui efface les impuretés de la veille³. Il blâme les vilaines mœurs de ses fidèles et essaye de les ramener dans le droit chemin? Ne vous y trompez pas; il ne le fait que par rancune et poursuit alors une vengeance personnelle. Lui-même, pour rencontrer sa maîtresse plus facilement n'hésite pas à prier Dieu que l'époux de celle-ci perde la vue, et c'est dans sa bouche que nous trouvons ce proverbe d'une singulière moralité:

...Wer ein frawen schon
Wil pueln, mües vor hin pueln den mon.

Fastn. 69: 85/86.

Aussi ce sacristain a-t-il raison de se méfier des curés:

Wer sein haus halten wil gar sauber,
Hüet sich vor pfaffen und vor täuber,
Wo sie wohn, pleibt das haus nit rain. »

Fastn. 69: 113/115.

Et ce n'est sans doute pas sans intention que notre poète placera un prêtre entre deux coquins⁴. Tous les trois se valent. Mais la même perfidie qui trouvera quelque excuse chez un brigand de métier ou chez notre espiègle, maître en supercherie, n'a droit à aucune indulgence chez un prêtre, où elle contraste davantage avec la dignité que le sacerdoce lui impose.

¹ *Fastn.* 13: 192.

² *Fastn.* 57: 213/217.

³ *Fastn.* 65: 299/301.

⁴ *Fastn.* 77.

Aussi nos paysans ne s'y trompent-ils pas, malgré leur stupidité, et l'autorité du prêtre sur ses paroissiens est nulle. Ils ont perdu tout respect, car ils savent bien ce que vaut leur curé:

Der pfaß der thuert uns alle effen,
Steckt doch selb aller schalckheit vol.

Fastn. 65: 160/161.

« Vous devriez donner le bon exemple, lui disent-ils, et pourtant vous ressemblez plutôt à Satan qu'à un ange¹. Vous nous indiquez une voie que vous-même ne suivez pas ». Qu'il n'essaye pas de faire croire à sa pauvreté et à sa sobriété! Ils savent là-dessus à quoi s'en tenir, et ce n'est pas pour rien que cet abbé gros et gras a perdu l'appétit et ne peut plus souffler².

Aussi voyez comme les paysans reçoivent ces moines qui parcourent le pays, quêtant comme des mendiants quelque argent, œufs et fromage³. Mais les cruelles vérités que le curé est obligé d'entendre à tout moment ne sont pas pour troubler notre compère que la conscience n'étouffe pas. Il saura bien se venger de ses ouailles; si leur générosité se ralentit, il leur en donnera pour leur argent, il leur fera de mauvais sermons:

Kupffer gelt, kupffer seelness. *Fastn.* 51: 264.

On voit que Hans Sachs prend un malin plaisir à faire des gens d'église des personnages aussi grotesques et aussi hideux que possible. Pas une fibre qui reste honnête en eux. Le poète n'a jamais la moindre indulgence pour eux, mais

¹ « Ir halt eüch, das es ist ain schant
Und stecket in dem püeben leben,
Ir solt uns güet exempel geben
Paiden mit wercken und mit worten,
So lebet ir an allen orten
Mer dewffelisch den engelisch. »

Fastn. 65: 290/295.

² « Im kloster aber ass ich wol,
Da war ich schier all nacht stüdvöl. »

Fastn. 27: 185/186.

³ « Die pewrin sint mit worten res,
Haisen mich ainen fawlen schlüeffel,
Ein stüelpen esl und groben püeffel.
Ich sol arbeiten, sie mich plagen,
Und tun mir stez vom Luter sagen. »

Fastn. 13: 154/158.

les accuse au contraire des plus noirs forfaits. Mais s'il dénonce leurs mœurs honteuses, il n'est pas le seul à déplorer un mal aussi profond, qui menace d'éloigner les fidèles de la religion. Tout le siècle est plein de ces lamentations qui s'élèvent de toutes parts contre les gens d'église.

Sont-ils seuls atteints par ses railleries? Hans Sachs, comme les conteurs auxquels il a emprunté ces personnages, n'a pas en vue une polémique générale contre l'église romaine. Il le dit clairement dans une de ses pièces¹. Partout il déguise un peu ses attaques: mais sous un voile de bonhomie malicieuse, sans cesser d'être douce, il est facile de découvrir les intentions de notre poète. C'est une bonne aubaine pour lui, le brave luthérien, de pouvoir railler les mœurs du clergé catholique, et c'est toujours de bon cœur qu'il rit de leurs mésaventures:

« Vor jaren hett ichs besser noch:

.....
Da ass ich hünér, vögl und genns,
Gesotten, pachen und prattisch,
Tranck wein und bier an meinem tisch.
Ytz isz ich brey, musz wasser sauffen.
Das macht der Lutter und sein hauffen. »

Fastn. 9: 60/68.

Dans une seule de ses farces, dont nous avons donné ailleurs une courte analyse², il est permis de reconnaître une tendance anticatholique. Apparemment Hans Sachs ne raille que l'Inquisiteur; mais lisez entre les lignes: sa verve satirique monte plus haut. Cet inquisiteur ne s'appelle-t-il pas *doctor Romanus*? Certes ce ne doit pas être sans intention que le poète lui a donné ce nom. Il y a là en vérité une satire déguisée contre l'Eglise catholique déjà ébranlée:

Unser hauss hat ein bösen gibel,
Uns ist gewichen der grundt stein,
Fürcht nur, es fall ein mal gar ein,
Wiewol wir es stets unter bültzen,
Vorm garen Vischen und fürhültzen.
Doch ist unser hauss gar vol schwachs,
Es senckt sich zum fall, spricht Hans Sachs.

Fastn. 53: 426/432.

¹ *Fastn.* 69: 359/360.

² *Fastn.* 53. Cf. chap. 1^{er}.

Sans doute notre poète, passionné par ce sujet d'actualité, se sera-t-il laissé entraîner malgré lui à dépasser les limites qu'il s'était assignées jusqu'ici. Nous ne le regrettons pas; car c'est là, certes, une des pièces les plus spirituelles que nous ayons de lui.

Même dans cette farce plus violemment satirique, le rôle du clergé est humoristique. C'est une figure comique aimée du temps de la Réforme. La joie qu'on prend à le railler s'explique d'ailleurs par l'éternel plaisir d'amoindrir tous les pouvoirs en les frondant; par la vie même des prêtres à l'époque de notre poète, et surtout parce que les questions même indirectement religieuses passionnaient alors toute l'Allemagne par leur brûlante actualité. Comme le diable lui-même, le curé est plutôt bouffon qu'odieux, et au milieu des éclats de rire de sa joie maligne, le spectateur ne peut se défendre d'une certaine pitié pour ce malheureux toujours berné, bafoué, battu.

Mais ce que Hans Sachs dit du clergé catholique, d'autres que lui le savent aussi. Quoi de surprenant alors que l'Eglise elle-même perde de jour en jour de sa puissance? Les fidèles désertent peu à peu les offices et les sermons¹; ils n'offrent plus rien à celle qu'ils comblaient autrefois². La religion réformée, si conforme à la nature allemande, fait chaque jour de nombreux adeptes. Le vulgaire est assez clairvoyant pour se rendre compte de ce qui répond à la religion véritable, telle que l'a voulue le Christ.

Ich wer vor lieber daheim gewessen,
 Het dafür in der bibl gelessen.
 Ich mag es auff mein aydt wol jehen,
 Das ich nit viel guts hab gesehen
 Im closter, denn viel gleyssnerey,
 Vil gebets, weng andacht darbey.

Fastn. 53: 409/414.

D'une part: humanité, simplicité; de l'autre: hypocrisie, faste inutiles. Tous embrassent peu à peu la nouvelle croyance. Seules les vieilles gens restent fidèles à leurs idées d'autrefois et ne se laissent pas influencer par « Luther et toute sa clique ».

¹ *Fastn.* 65: 168.

² 168 sq. — *Fastn.* 9: 49/50.

Voilà, exposées par un contemporain, quelques causes de la Réforme. Ces quelques indications ne sont-elles pas pleines d'intérêt?

Mais, si mauvais qu'ils soient, les prêtres ne sont guère plus fourbes que les autres. Tous les hommes le sont et ne songent qu'à s'enrichir en trompant leur prochain. Ou du moins, pour être plus exact, ils appartiennent à deux classes bien distinctes: d'une part les naïfs qui se laissent et se laisseront toujours duper; d'autre part les malins, les effrontés, qui s'entendront toujours à rouler les moins fins. Nous avons vu déjà le paysan, pauvre Jeannot trompé, voyons maintenant les renards qui l'exploitent.

Tel médecin que vous prenez pour un savant et à qui vous confiez votre vie et celle des vôtres, ne sait ni *a* ni *b*. Après avoir passé une partie de sa jeunesse à dire la bonne aventure aux citadins et aux paysans trop crédules, il s'est fait charlatan pour gagner davantage. Car sa cupidité est sans bornes; il est si vicieux que même ayant affaire au diable en personne, il trouvera bien une ruse pour le tromper aussi¹. Il ne connaît rien à la médecine? Qu'est-ce que cela fait? Avec de grands airs et beaucoup de mensonges, quelques mots de latin de cuisine, voilà un docteur respectable et qui en imposera aux badauds de paysans. D'ailleurs n'a-t-il pas ses lettres scellées, gage de sa science infaillible? Les malades? Il s'en soucie peu, vous vend un peu de thériaque et des racines plus ou moins rares et, comme les médecins de Molière, ordonne à chacun son remède universel, une purgation. Si cela ne lui réussit pas, tant pis, peu lui importe:

Wan ich kan nicks zu arzney sachen,
Den ein schlechte pürgaczen machen,
Die den paurn macht ain ghrümpl im paüch,
Die ich zu aller kranckheit prawch:
Aim hilfftz, der ander stirbt darfon,
Da ligt mir eben nichtzen on.

Fastn. 80: 79/84.

Le *Bader*, rebouteux de campagne en sait tout autant, et se charge même de remettre les membres déboîtés et de

¹ *Fastn.* 76.

soigner les blessés¹. Il faut ajouter que cet art leur est singulièrement facilité par la stupidité inépuisable des paysans. Quelle source intarissable mise à profit par toute la gent peu scrupuleuse des villes et par les nomades.

Mais la sottise du citadin nourrit aussi son monde. Que de coquins dans les cités! Ce sont les voleurs de métier, qui, trop paresseux pour travailler, gagnent leur vie par ruse. Belle source de revenus pour eux qu'une table de jeu! Car ils savent filer la carte avec adresse et connaissent maint truc pour gagner plus sûrement la partie. Tant pis pour celui qui s'y laisse prendre².

Sous des apparences plus simples, le cabaretier ne vaut pas toujours mieux; souvent ils s'arrangent tous ensemble pour « rouler » le client. C'est par cupidité qu'il se fait trompeur: il mouille son vin, triche sur la bière et double les dettes du chaland³. Est-il vraiment pour rien dans le tour de coquin joué chez lui à un paysan peu malin⁴? Je n'en mettrais pas ma main au feu!

Semblables à lui, tous les marchands trompent sur leur marchandise: ils vendent cher, trichent sur le poids, dans les comptes se trompent toujours à leur profit. Leurs ruses sont infinies. Ne vont-ils pas jusqu'à mêler de la poussière à leurs farines ou des crottes de souris avec le poivre en grains⁵?

Mais le Juif est encore pire. Sa cupidité ne connaît aucune limite; il est par métier usurier et s'enrichit aux dépens des malheureux qui meurent de faim: sa maison est

Vol wuecher, rawbes und diebstal

Pis an den first vol uberal. *Fastn.* 76: 312/313.

Il prête à la semaine avec des intérêts qui représentent jusqu'à six fois l'argent prêté. Les procédés illégaux de ces usuriers soulèvent bientôt un concert de plaintes⁶. Il est vrai

¹ *Fastn.* 75.

² « Wie wol ich kan die wüerffel knüepffen,
Die kartenpleter mercken und krüepffen. »

Fastn. 81: 67/68.

³ *Fastn.* 25: 190/192.

⁴ *Fastn.* 25.

⁵ *Fastn.* 13: 130/139.

⁶ *Fastn.* 78.

que, une fois, Hans Sachs à la fin de la pièce demande pardon aux Juifs de les avoir un peu chargés; mais c'est pour leur décocher un nouveau trait:

Nün frew wir uns, das diese stat
Kainen jüeden mer in ir hat,
Die solch kürczweil möcht habn vertrosn.

Fastn. 76: 410/411.

Il y a encore d'autres coquins, aussi redoutables: ce sont les *lansquenets*, ces bandes de mercenaires congédiés à la fin des dernières campagnes, et qui, inoccupés et paresseux, vivent de mendicité et de pillage, sans reculer même parfois devant le meurtre, habitués qu'ils sont aux massacres.

S'il s'en trouve d'isolés, ils ont vite fait de se rallier à des bandes organisées et deviennent alors de véritables brigands. C'est parmi eux, le plus souvent, que les nobles, qui font de leurs châteaux des repaires redoutables et terrorisent tout le pays par leurs exactions, recrutent tous leurs gens. A cette époque, ces brigands sont une véritable calamité. Commandées par des bandits de haute naissance, leurs bandes, cachées dans les bois ou dans les châteaux guettent les marchands et les voyageurs, leur dérobent tous leurs biens, les font prisonniers, en exigeant une lourde rançon¹. Le brigandage n'est-il pas pour eux un véritable métier?

Ich weiss ein ort, da sind edlleut,
Die gebn jrn Knechten halbe beut,
Da kans einr dest dapfferer wagen

Fastn. 27: 217/219.

dit un des complices, mécontent de son maître. Ne dirait-on pas d'une entreprise commerciale?

D'autres bandits plus indépendants se réunissent en petits groupes et pillent pour leur compte personnel². Ils ne sont guère moins dangereux que les précédents, et, s'il le faut, ne reculent pas devant le meurtre pour venir à bout de leur proie.

Cependant l'écolier nomade, plus malin encore, met toute son intelligence à duper le monde. Vrai boute-en-train, bon garçon quand on veut bien lui ouvrir sa bourse, il saura

¹ *Fastn.* 27.

² *Fastn.* 70.

bien, si vous vous montrez intraitable, faire naître une occasion de se venger. Et Dieu sait si son imagination est fertile! Rappelons-nous le bon tour qu'il joue au curé dans la farce de l'« Ecolier évoquant le diable »¹. Combien de nigauds se laissent prendre à ses ruses! Ma foi, tant pis pour eux, et notre filou aura les rieurs de son côté.

C'est là une figure originale du temps. Allant d'école en école, ils traversaient tout le pays, extorquant aux paysans quelques petites offrandes. En chemin ils mendiaient et, au besoin, volaient pour se tirer d'affaire. Ils étaient très nombreux et formaient un contingent de malins escrocs dont on se méfiait. Bebel, Murner, dans sa *Narrenbeschwörung*, un peu plus tard Kirchhoff dans le *Wendunmut* ne cessent de flétrir ces vagabonds, paresseux, vauriens, qui, bien qu'ils n'aient rien étudié, s'entendent si bien à tromper les gens pour éviter de travailler. Afin de leur extirper de l'argent, ils savaient raconter ou faire des miracles. Souvent ils disaient venir de la montagne de Vénus, où ils avaient appris toutes sortes de sciences, entre autres la magie. Toujours prêts à engager leur foi, ils n'hésitaient même pas à affirmer qu'ils venaient directement du Paradis. Ils savent vite flairer la sottise humaine, se prêtent tout de suite aux circonstances les plus inattendues, aux situations les plus étranges qu'ils aident souvent avec malice et effronterie¹. Comme le poète en fait un portrait vivant et réel! Il n'oublie même pas de nous faire remarquer, pour que nous les reconnaissons au besoin, que ces aventuriers portent comme signe distinctif une chaînette jaune autour du cou:

Es tregt der schuler hoch erfarn
An seinem hals ain gelbes garn.

Fastn. 22: 143/144.

Beaucoup, après une jeunesse dévergondée, ne revenaient jamais à de meilleurs sentiments, et pillant çà et là, on en a vu plus d'un finir sur le gibet.

Mais le maître de tous les fripons, celui qui berne tout le monde, si malin soit-on, et à qui va tout de même notre

¹ *Fastn.* 37; — *Fastn.* 22.

sympathie, parce qu'il a pour lui la malice alerte, vive et spirituelle, parce qu'il est l'esprit en face de l'inertie et de la sottise, c'est Eulenspiegel.

Eulenspiegel a une imagination fertile et ses bons (ou mauvais!) tours sont légion. Il passe sa vie à se moquer de tous et à tromper la confiance bête. Il fait le mal par plaisir, comme l'apprennent à leurs dépens les trois malheureux aveugles, rien que pour se distraire, et par amour-propre, car il ne veut pas traverser de villes sans y faire de dupes¹. Mais le plus souvent ses ruses ne servent qu'à apaiser son estomac qui crie famine. Car il appartient à la famille de Panurge, de tous ceux qui, nés pauvres avec une intelligence inépuisable, ont à lutter sans cesse, s'ils veulent obtenir dans la société une place digne d'eux. Comme Panurge, notre espiègle supporte gaîment sa misère. Que lui importe s'il est sujet, de nature, à la maladie de « faulte d'argent » ? N'a-t-il pas, lui aussi, soixante et trois manières d'en trouver toujours à son besoin ? Au demeurant, le meilleur fils du monde ! D'une astuce sans égale tant qu'il est sûr de la réussite, semblable encore en cela à son cousin Panurge, il s'arrange pour mettre tout le monde aux prises, puis s'esquive quand il sent approcher l'orage, et s'en va jouer ses tours ailleurs. Tours inattendus et toujours nouveaux, comme ceux de son ancêtre Reineke ; toujours coupable, il est souvent pris, mais jamais confondu ; Reineke, Panurge, Eulenspiegel, quelle richesse d'esprit pour exploiter la lourdeur et la bêtise, mais aussi quel fonds de satire mordante et de sagesse cachée dans le récit de leurs méfaits.

Hans Sachs, lui aussi, est un enfant terrible. Eulenspiegel, lui plaît par la belle humeur de ses fantaisies ; notre poète a une sympathie bienveillante pour son héros préféré, une indulgence infinie pour ses tours sans nombre, qu'il lui pardonne d'avance, parce qu'il a de l'esprit.

Il faut reconnaître aussi que tous ces fripons ont beau jeu : la superstition de ce siècle, qui donne toute sa con-

¹ *Fastn.* 51: 5/8.

fiance à quelque diseur de bonne aventure ou faiseur de miracles, arrive au plus haut point¹. La magie ne l'étonne plus: il croit à toutes les sornettes des malins, d'autant plus facilement qu'il les comprend moins. C'est l'âge de l'alchimie:

Fach an die künstlich alchamey,
Auss kupffer goldt, silber auss bley!
Du wirst bald reich, thut dir gelingen.

Fastn. 8: 322/324.

C'est le siècle où Faust, roi des magiciens, attire sur lui l'attention de l'Allemagne. Chacun s'inspire de lui. Tel paysan recommande à sa voisine quelques bonnes recettes pour faire revenir son mari à la vie:

Wen irn gern wider lebent het,
Wie wen ir in verhaissen thet
Ins grüne tal mit drey pfund wachs
Und etwan mit eim kloben flachs
Und eim silbren opfer darzw?
Vileicht möcht er wider in rw
Vom dot wider kumen zum leben;
Wan fert is auch geschehen eben,
Das ein pair widr lebentig wuer.

Fastn. 60: 247/255.

Tel autre connaît un moyen magique infailible pour se concilier les faveurs d'une belle². Beaucoup portent des « Wundsegen » qui les protègent contre tout mal³. Il y a ainsi mille croyances superstitieuses répandues parmi les gens du peuple.

Notre poète, lui, ne se laisse pas prendre à ces sottises; il sait à quoi s'en tenir sur la science de tous ces larrons; riant de bon cœur de cette magie cousue de fil blanc, il soulève un coin du rideau pour que, nous aussi, voyions clair dans leur jeu⁴.

D'ailleurs tous ces malins, il les a vus à l'œuvre; il les a rencontrés sur les routes en faisant son tour d'Allemagne, comme il a connu aussi les chanteurs, acrobates, col-porteurs, mendiants, tziganes, que le conseil des villes chasse de partout, et tous les mille aventuriers, toujours en quête de bonne fortune.

¹ *Fastn.* 10.

² *Fastn.* 62: 419/422.

³ *Fastn.* 79: 79/81.

⁴ *Fastn.* 37 et *Fastn.* 41: 160/171.

Dans ce tableau de l'humanité, plein de gaité franche, tous les travers des hommes sont dépeints surtout sous leurs aspects comiques. Car le but dernier que poursuit notre poète, c'est d'améliorer un peu l'humanité. Le meilleur moyen, pense-t-il, c'est de railler ses travers et ses folies, c'est de lui montrer sa propre image, avec toutes ses difformités et ses imperfections, dans ses aspects les plus grotesques.

Cette satire n'est pas une violente diatribe contre l'humanité: pour se faire entendre, elle prend une voix douce, beaucoup plus douce que celle de Luther. Hans Sachs n'a pas entrepris une guerre sans merci contre le vieil ennemi juré, le vice; il préfère prendre le mal par son côté abordable, le côté comique. Au lieu de nous faire trembler, il nous fait rire. Nous aurions mauvaise grâce à nous en plaindre! Rarement sa palette se charge de couleurs sombres, car, d'un caractère naturellement enjoué, le pessimisme ne l'envahit jamais pour longtemps. Cette satire de la société témoigne d'un optimisme sain. Avec des couleurs crues, saisissantes, elle est quelquefois mordante, cinglante par l'inattendu; jamais elle n'est méchante ou haineuse.

Car Hans Sachs n'en veut pas à l'humanité de ses folies. Il est homme lui-même et voudrait guérir ses semblables. Et la preuve qu'il se laisse entraîner par ses sentiments, c'est que sa satire semble ignorer la justice distributive. Elle noircit la femme, qui n'est pas toujours un démon, et favorise quelque fieffé filou comme Eulenspiegel. Pourquoi ce qui est pour l'un péché véniel devient-il pour l'autre un forfait? C'est que, comme l'humanité elle-même, notre poète a des préférences, et qu'il ne sait pas toujours résister à ses faiblesses.

Enfin, un dernier caractère de cette satire, c'est que, nous présentant des types de personnages bien distincts, elle s'élève à un point de vue humain tout général, oublie les traits particuliers et accidentels pour refléter, non des individus exceptionnels, mais la société à un des tournants les plus importants de l'histoire. Car Hans Sachs flagelle les folies du temps dans tous les milieux, et sait donner à ses

personnages un sens symbolique qui les élève au-dessus d'eux-mêmes. C'est un siècle tout entier, dans sa complexité mobile, qui vit là, devant nous, éternellement.

Les farces sont bien, en effet, un miroir qui ne dissimule rien; si de temps à autre la surface réfléchissante s'incurve un peu, exagérant certains traits, comme le fait la caricature, il ne faut pas en vouloir à Hans Sachs. Quand il force, c'est malgré lui, entraîné par le plaisir qu'il prend à sa tâche, ou bien pour frapper davantage et donner plus de poids à son enseignement. D'ailleurs tout satirique aime l'exagération, qui transforme son tableau en caricature.

Mais, au fond, nous avons pu le voir dans le cours de cette étude, nous avons sous les yeux une peinture fidèle de la société de l'époque.

Nous trouvons même dans les *Fastnachtspiele*, en dehors des grandes questions qui passionnent le temps, toute une foule de détails familiers, qui, nous reportant de quelques siècles en arrière, nous permettent de pénétrer en quelque sorte la vie de ces générations disparues, en nous découvrant les recoins les plus cachés de Nuremberg, en déroulant devant nos yeux des images aussi intimes que vivantes.

Ici Joseph nous dit en confidence qu'il emportera quelques ducats pour se frayer plus facilement un chemin jusqu'au roi Salomon¹. Là, c'est le *Schultheiss*, maire du village, qui tranchera les différends et rétablira l'ordre dans sa petite république. Ailleurs il donnera le signal pour que chacun mette en liberté ses vaches, qu'on mènera paître en commun². Ou bien quelques-uns, pour suivre une mode qui se répand en Allemagne au xvi^e siècle, vont dans les villes d'eaux, qu'ils soient malades ou non³.

Partout notre poète nous renseigne sur les mœurs de son époque; il est, à ce point de vue, plein de ressources et fournit une mine abondante de documents à l'historien curieux de connaître ce siècle. Aussi bien que le fera le *Sim-*

¹ *Fastn.* 26: 119/122.

² *Fastn.* 34 : 39/40.

³ *Fastn.* 27; *Fastn.* 8: 367/368.

plicius Simplicissimus pour la guerre de Trente ans, ces farces nous renseignent sur la Réforme. Partout nous y voyons le monde avec les yeux d'un bourgeois de Nuremberg, nous vivons aujourd'hui le siècle de Hans Sachs, comme il l'a vécu il y a quatre cents ans. Aussi les *Fastnachtspiele* de Hans Sachs sont-ils encore, pour le lecteur d'aujourd'hui, pleins d'images colorées et vivantes; tableaux débordants de vie, ils donnent l'illusion de la réalité. S'ils ne sont que des intérieurs flamands à la façon de Téniers et de van Ostade, n'est-ce pas un mérite suffisant d'avoir su y exprimer avec vérité une époque entière sous ses multiples aspects? Comme celles des peintres flamands, les compositions de Hans Sachs méritent de rester immortelles.

CHAPITRE V

Le Comique dans les *Fastnachtspiele*

Comique des personnages. — Il n'y a pas *un* personnage comique, mais des personnages ridicules: par l'extérieur, par leur caractère, par leurs discours. — Peinture satirique. — Comique des situations. — *Schadenfreude*. — Tours comiques: noms, jeux de mots. — Latin macaronique. — Ironie. — Malices. — Comique des contrastes. — Humour. — Caractère de ce comique.

Nous venons de voir que Hans Sachs met à la scène la société de son temps avec tous ses défauts, pour en faire une peinture satirique. Nous ne serons donc pas surpris que ses *Fastnachtspiele* aient un but comique évident. Comme le *Schwank*, comme toute la littérature comique du Moyen âge et de la Renaissance, ces pièces, de par leur nature, par l'époque à laquelle elles sont destinées à être jouées, ne sont composées que dans le but de plaire au public, non pour l'intéresser, comme par exemple les tragédies, les *Klagreden* ou les dialogues et les poésies, mais pour le distraire et l'amuser. Il emploie, nous dit-il lui-même, *schöne liebliche farben, die schwermütigen melancolischen gemüter frölich und leichtsinnig zu machen*¹.

Même les *Fastnachtspiele*, où nous avons signalé un ton sérieux, étaient écrits dans cette intention, comme l'indique l'auteur maintes fois:

Wöllen euch allen zu ehr
Ein kurtzes Fasnacht spiel hie machen,
Wer denn lust hat, mag sein wol lachen.

Fastn. 2: 4/6².

Suit une pièce qui n'est rien moins que gaie. Le sujet choisi, ou l'humeur du moment peut avoir contribué plus d'une fois à atténuer cette tendance comique. De plus, il faut remarquer que l'esprit naïf de ce temps s'amusait de récits ou de pièces qui nous semblent insipides aujourd'hui.

Même dans les pièces, dont nous parlerons plus longuement plus tard, où Hans Sachs veut donner un enseignement

¹ Vorrede des zweiten Gedichtbuchs.

² Voir aussi *Fastn.* 9: 32.

moral, cette intention lutte avec le désir d'amuser; la morale passe au second plan le plus souvent, et notre poète fait tout ce qu'il peut pour qu'elle ne soit pas ennuyeuse. Car il veut distraire, et ma foi, il y réussit assez bien généralement.

Il est satirique, nous l'avons vu; aussi aime-t-il se moquer et rire, et par conséquent faire rire. La peinture des personnages sera une des principales sources de son comique.

Pourtant disons tout de suite qu'on ne trouve pas parmi les héros de notre poète un farceur attitré, un pitre, personnage conventionnel de mascarade, chargé de soulever les rires par ses lazzi, comme nous en verrons apparaître plus tard sur le théâtre comique allemand, notamment chez Jacob Ayrer, sous l'influence du clown anglais. Toutes les qualités qui se concentreront bientôt en un type déterminé, qu'il s'appelle *Pickelhering*, *Scham Pitasche*, *Jack Pudding*, *Signor Macaroni*, ou *Hans Wurst*, sont éparpillés chez Hans Sachs dans des caractères multiples: ici Eulenspiegel, là le *Narr*, ailleurs Esope ou un paysan. On trouve bien dans une des pièces de notre poète¹ un *lansquenet* du nom de Wursthans, mais, malgré ses réparties amusantes, il n'est pas particulièrement comique et n'a rien du Hans Wurst dont il porte le nom.

Comme dans toute satire, tous les personnages des farces sont plus ou moins chargés; mais c'est surtout la femme, le curé et le paysan que Hans Sachs attaque sans trêve ni merci. Le paysan est son éternelle cible. Faut-il pour cela l'assimiler à un bouffon et dire avec Reuling² que le paysan, tel que Clas³, Ulla Lapp⁴ et le Bauer⁵ tient chez Hans Sachs la place d'un « *Narr* », et que notre poète, incapable de donner au « *Narr* » assez de vie dramatique, de complexité et de force d'expression, en a fait un paysan comique, plus facile à charger de traits vivants et grotesques? Cela n'est pas certain. Il est vrai que le paysan est la cible préférée

¹ *Fastn.* 27.

² Reuling: *Die komische Figur in den wichtigsten deutschen Dramen.*

³ *Fastn.* 53.

⁴ *Fastn.* 62.

⁵ *Fastn.* 26.

des railleries acérées de Hans Sachs; mais la paysanne ne l'est-elle pas au même degré? Et pourquoi d'autres personnages, le curé, le mari malheureux, le diable, ne seraient-ils pas aussi des *Narren*?

Le paysan n'était-il pas déjà dans le mime comme dans l'atellane et dans toutes les formes de la comédie populaire, le type préféré de ces personnages stupides qu'on bafoue toujours, sur qui sont dirigés tous les traits de la satire? Il existait à côté du « *stupidus* » et du fou de cour, dans les pièces antiques, on le retrouve dans toute l'Allemagne du Moyen âge, où son costume seul est déjà un déguisement comique. Rien de surprenant alors que plus facile à peindre, mieux connu, plus humain et offrant un fonds comique inépuisable, il se soit développé plus rapidement que le « *Narr* » et un peu à ses dépens, surtout à l'aube des temps modernes.

Nous croyons qu'à vrai dire Hans Sachs a choisi dans l'humanité les types qu'il pouvait le plus facilement rendre grotesques et qu'il a accusé leurs ridicules pour corriger les hommes par la satire. Non seulement le paysan lui était livré par tradition, mais c'est un type fertile et qu'il a l'occasion d'étudier à son aise, autant de raisons pour qu'il y revienne souvent.

Il est vrai d'ailleurs que Hans Sachs ne se sent guère attiré par le personnage du « *Narr* » que lui offre aussi la tradition; s'il le conserve parfois, il n'y ajoute jamais de traits nouveaux, preuve qu'il l'intéressait peu. Son « *Narr* » n'est jamais une individualité, il reste abstrait et quelque peu gauche. C'est que Hans Sachs ne le connaît pas directement, ne l'a pas étudié comme ses autres personnages, dans tous leurs faits et gestes. Aussi il est, dans ses pièces comme déjà avant lui, railleur, méprisant, méchant, grossier; esprit terre à terre, il ne sait parler d'autre chose que de manger et de boire¹; c'est souvent lui qui reçoit les coups².

Plus souvent Hans Sachs personnifie sous le nom de « *Narr* » le génie du mal³. Ainsi dans la pièce intitulée *Ein*

¹ *Fastn.* 83: 42/44; *Fastn.* 75.

² *Fastn.* 83.

³ Il peut être intéressant de rappeler à ce sujet que Rudwin attribue au *Narr* et au diable ou génie du mal, une même origine et un rôle identique dans les cérémonies païennes primitives.

*Vatter, ein Son und ein Narr*¹, ce personnage cherche à entraîner un jeune adolescent dans la voie du mal. C'est un véritable démon de la tentation; il connaît les faibles de sa proie, mais n'est pas comique le moins du monde.

C'est le même esprit du mal que nous voyons dans la pièce du « *Narrenschnneiden* », où chaque « *Narr* », au fur et à mesure de son extraction, nous est désigné par le poète. C'est Orgueil, Avarice, Envie, etc... Tous les travers, les vices, les ridicules qui défigurent l'homme sont pour Hans Sachs comme pour son époque des « *Narren* ». Et dans cette pièce, il traite une fois de plus un des sujets favoris du temps, la folie humaine, comme Sébastien Brant avec son *Narrenschiff* et Murner avec sa *Narrenbeschwörung* l'avaient fait avant lui. C'est encore lui enfin que nous rencontrons dans les moralités anglaises sous le nom de *Vice*.

Tous les vices sont des sottises. Aussi les hommes avec tous leurs défauts revêtent-ils, dans ces farces, l'habit de la folie. Veulent-ils éviter le ridicule? Qu'ils chassent leurs « *Narren* ». S'ils ne veulent pas se corriger, on se moquera d'eux. Et c'est pourquoi Hans Sachs s'efforcera de rendre tous ses personnages grotesques et comiques par leurs vices hideux et leurs passions.

Si le « *Narr* » a parfois des idées vraiment bizarres et amusantes, comme celui de la farce *Der doctor mit der grosen nasen*², avec ses naïvetés inattendues, Eulenspiegel, lui, a toujours des inventions diaboliques nouvelles et du plus haut comique. Toujours prêt à jouer des tours, chacun de ses actes, chacune de ses paroles soulève les rires; comme dans l'ancien mime, il prend tout à la lettre et cultive le jeu de mots:

Mein Ewlenspiegl, wie stet dein sach?

— Mein sach stet nit, sunder sie leit.

— Sag mir, wo hastw dein kranckheit?

— O herr, oben auf der panck.

Fastn. 58: 158/161.

Mais, s'il est spirituel et malin, il ne ressemble pourtant pas non plus à un bouffon, ni au clown de la comédie anglaise, ni au polichinelle de la comédie italienne.

¹ *Fastn.* 6.

² *Fastn.* 83.

Le personnage de notre poète qui s'en rapproche le plus et annonce peut-être le Hanswurst prochain, c'est le diable. Il a gardé des mystères du Moyen âge un caractère burlesque, il est vrai, mais il n'a jamais le beau rôle; ici aussi nous trouvons notre pauvre Lucifer toujours battu et mécontent. Aux prises avec les fripons dont nous avons fait connaissance tout à l'heure et qui peuplent le monde entier, il se montre simple, niais même; et trompé, bafoué par tous, il mérite bien son nom de pauvre diable, *armer Teufel*.

Ici c'est un marchand dont il a acheté l'âme, qui, par ruse, échappe à ses griffes¹. Là un charlatan, avec lequel il s'était associé, le vole et se moque de lui par-dessus le marché². Mais son aventure la plus amusante, nous l'avons déjà mentionnée, est certes celle où l'entraîne sa douce moitié; pour échapper au martyre que lui réserve son ménage, le malheureux n'a qu'une ressource, celle de retourner au plus vite en enfer.

Ainsi, bon garçon sans malice ou impuissant à mener à bien ses mauvaises intentions, il est la dupe des femmes et des malhonnêtes gens, et a beaucoup de traits communs avec le *clown*, qui, lui aussi, reçoit les coups, quelle que soit leur destination.

Comment Hans Sachs rendra-t-il ses personnages comiques, s'il n'en fait pas des Hanswurst? Il nous les dépeindra grotesques, au physique d'abord. Ils restent des hommes semblables à ceux que nous voyons autour de nous, des hommes grotesques certes, mais pas des pitres.

Ainsi, il semble que plus que tous ses contemporains Hans Sachs se rapproche de la comédie de mœurs, de la comédie de Molière, par exemple; il préfère des personnages réels à un personnage de tradition, conventionnel, sans vie profonde, quoique familier au public. Et il n'hésite pas à remplacer ces types convenus et inertes par un type nouveau à la scène, Eulenspiegel, plus vivant, plus humain, plus vrai et pas moins amusant.

¹ *Fastn.* 19.

² *Fastn.* 76.

L'extérieur seul de ses personnages suffit à dérider l'auditoire. Voyez ce gourmand¹, qui s'avance sur la scène, gros comme un muid, impotent, ne marchant qu'avec peine sur deux béquilles, essoufflé par les quelques pas qu'il vient de faire. La gaucherie et la lourdeur de cette figure ne promettent-elles pas au spectateur un beau divertissement?

Voyez là-bas ces deux vieilles, comme elles sont appétissantes:

Högret und pucklet sind von leib,
Gerunzelt, ghrumpfelt und ungschaffen,
Muerret und munckisch gleich den affen.

Fastn. 19: 94/96.

Le diable, en les apercevant, croit que ce sont des monstres et s'écarte bien vite:

sag mir, sind es zway merwunder?
ach der scheuzlichen, schnöden kunder.

Fastn. 19: 261.

Ailleurs ce sont des paysans, réunis un jour de fête par l'espoir de récompenses alléchantes, pour prendre part à un concours de nez². Quelle collection de beaux spécimens! ils sont dignes de masques de Carnaval, et pas du goût le plus délicat! Et ce vieux paysan qui s'avise encore d'être amoureux malgré les ans, ne prête-t-il pas à rire? Voici son portrait sans retouches:

Hinckent, mit einem pogen ruecken,
Sein maul ist gancz voller zanluecken,
Sein angsicht gfalt wie ein sewmagen,
Get wonex wie ein alter wagen,
Hat knocket fues gleich einem trappen.

Fastn. 62: 83/87.

Comment ne pas rire à la vue d'un aussi joli muguet? Quant à ce curé qui, surpris par l'arrivée du mari, n'a que le temps de se précipiter dans le trou du poêle, il n'a pas été non plus des mieux partagés par Dame Nature:

so schwarz, zottet und ungeschaffn
Er war gleich pucklet unserm pfaffen,
Hanck auch also auff einem bain.

Fastn. 37: 267/269.

Ici encore Hans Sachs se rencontre avec la tradition, qui aimait à railler les difformités, les infirmités

¹ *Fastn.* 11.

² *Fastn.* 20.

humaines. Mais il le fait sans rudesse ni méchanceté; et le plus souvent chez notre poète, la laideur extérieure ne fait qu'exprimer plus clairement la laideur du caractère. Non, Hans Sachs ne se moque pas des infirmités physiques comme telles, ce qui serait grossier et bien peu généreux, mais en tant que les personnages les accusent eux-mêmes par le ridicule de leurs actions.

En effet, leur corps n'est pas plus baroque que leur esprit. Voici un galant d'une fatuité stupide: il se croit aimé et va jusqu'à prendre les refus les plus catégoriques pour des aveux déguisés:

..... (wan nechst)
 gabs mir ain patsch mit flacher hant
 In rueck, das ich fiel an die want,
 Und warff mir auch ein scheit holcz nach.
 Das ie aus lauter lieb geschach.
 Das war irer lieb anefang.

Fastn. 62: 63/67.

Tel autre, par son avarice, sera la cible tout indiquée des mauvais plaisants du voisinage¹. Cette femme, toujours prête à grogner et à mordre, qui s'en prend au premier venu sans rime ni raison, ne dirait-on pas un chien enragé que rien ne saurait apaiser²? Nous avons vu comment la sottise légendaire des paysans et des paysannes, la méchanceté et la ruse des femmes sont une source inépuisable de comique, un des moyens auquel Hans Sachs aura recours pour accuser le ridicule de ses personnages.

Ecoutez-les! Quelles idées baroques ne prennent naissance dans ces cerveaux difformes: en voici un qui s'avise de couvrir des fromages³. Ailleurs un pauvre paysan est effrayé de savoir qu'il va être père d'un poulain: comment fera-t-il pour allaiter son jeune nourrisson⁴? Tel autre ne peut croire qu'il est mort et se trouve au Purgatoire. *So bin ich nur mein arme Seel?* demande-t-il plein d'angoisse au moine qui le flagelle⁵. Et cet autre, qui part au marché, comme

¹ *Fastn.* 16; *Fastn.* 41.

² *Fastn.* 4.

³ *Fastn.* 34.

⁴ *Fastn.* 16.

⁵ *Fastn.* 42.

l'enfant allant aux commissions, répétera tout le long du chemin le nom de ce qu'il va acheter :

will ich stetigs sprechen: saff', saff'.
Das ich des saffrans nit verges

Fastn. 79: 140/141.

ce qui, d'ailleurs ne l'empêche pas, quelques minutes plus tard de scander sa marche en disant: « *stölþ, stölþ, stölþ, stölþrian* ».

Leurs paroles elles-mêmes sont des plus comiques. En voici un qui, parlant à l'abbé, le salue à tout moment du titre de *mein Herr Dabt*, soulevant ainsi chaque fois de nouveaux éclats de rire¹. Ou bien il écorche les mots difficiles ou étrangers, à la grande joie des spectateurs. « *Purgatorium* » ne dit rien à son esprit lourd :

« ach, sag mirs teudsch (s'écrite-t-il), ich bit dich drum,
Ich kann warlich kein Laperdein! »

Fastn. 42: 261.

Aussi n'y verra-t-il pas malice quand il appellera l'Inquisiteur *Nequamsiter*² ou le Médecin Isach *Sewsack*³. Souvent il ne comprend pas mieux sa propre langue :

Pistw nicht imer herr alain
— Mein fraw lest mich wol herr sein,
Ich mues aber thun was sie wil.

Fastn. 12: 131/133.

Tel autre a le souci de son honneur, et quel honneur!

Bekenn nichts! bewar unser ehr!
Dann diser stücklein seind noch mehr.

Fastn. 21: 137/138.

Tous ces personnages avec leurs ridicules humains sont certes plus intéressants qu'un bouffon quelconque, toujours le même, et qui, avec ses propos spirituels ou grossiers, deviendrait ennuyeux à la longue. Puis, les spectateurs aiment mieux voir devant eux la peinture de leurs semblables. Ils s'entendent parler eux-mêmes, reconnaissent tels ou tels voisins avec leur langage, leurs expressions, leurs jurons familiers, suivent avec intérêt ces gens dont ils partagent les appétits et les convoitises, les idées et les sentiments. C'est de là,

¹ *Fastn.* 42: 153, 162, 179.

² *Fastn.* 53: 125.

³ *Fastn.* 80: 130.

sans doute, que vient le grand succès des personnages comiques de notre poète.

D'ailleurs le goût qu'ont les hommes pour le grotesque et la caricature, comme Aristophane et Hans Sachs s'y complaisent, est aussi vieux que le comique. Il semble même que ce soit là le genre de comique le plus primitif. Car avant que l'homme soit assez civilisé pour imaginer ou seulement prendre plaisir à un comique plus délicat, il se réjouit surtout des exagérations de la caricature et du comique grossier, qui répond mieux à ses mœurs rudes. Le public pour lequel notre poète écrit ne connaît pas encore ce raffinement des manières qui se manifeste déjà dans d'autres classes, au début des temps modernes. Aussi comprend-il surtout les productions grotesques de son cher poète, comme en France, il applaudit aux fantaisies populacières d'un Rabelais.

Mais les personnages des farces ne sont pas seulement risibles par eux-mêmes. Le comique naît souvent des situations inattendues et burlesques dans lesquelles ils se trouvent.

C'est le pauvre curé, pris en faute, qui se voit contraint de choisir entre deux alternatives: être dénoncé au mari trompé, et alors s'attendre de sa part à toutes les violences qu'il mérite et dont il a déjà été plusieurs fois menacé, ou bien accepter un rôle ridicule qui le dégrade à ses propres yeux, et avouer publiquement qu'il est obligé de se soumettre à celui qu'il a si mal reçu quelques instants auparavant. Aussi quelle joie pour notre malin compère et pour le spectateur, de s'amuser aux dépens du curé, qui ne sait comment sortir de cette impasse¹.

Ailleurs, voici une femme qui ne voit pas plus loin que le bout de son nez. Ne s'avise-t-elle pas de demander à son mari une preuve certaine de sa fidélité? « Je m'en rapporte, dit-elle, au jugement de Dieu: prends ce fer chaud ». Le mari accepte, et grâce à une ruse, sort indemne de cette épreuve. Mais la voici prise à son propre piège, car il ré-

¹ *Fastn.* 37.

clame d'elle la même ordalie cruelle. Elle, qui sait mieux que personne à quoi s'en tenir sur la netteté de sa conscience, commence à le flatter pour l'amadouer; elle l'appelle « *mon cher mari* », « *mon petit mignon adoré* », et proteste de son innocence. Voyez-la se débattre et inventer toutes les ruses possibles; mais elle échoue. Il lui faut s'incliner; alors, elle avoue une petite faute, une seule: le mari reste inflexible; elle confesse successivement qu'il y en a encore deux autres, puis quatre, enfin la demi-douzaine. Autant d'aveux très comiques et bien amenés; notre commère sort, toute la première, victime de cette comédie qu'elle a elle-même imaginée, mais dont elle attendait une tout autre issue¹.

Il en est d'autres plus rusées, qui, tout aussi pures, savent mieux se tirer d'embarras. Celle-ci, revenant d'une visite nocturne peu avouable, trouve la porte fermée par son mari: elle feint d'être désespérée, jette une pierre à l'eau et, tandis que son époux, effrayé de ce qui arrive, vole à son secours, elle rentre vite et le laisse dehors, faisant croire à tous que, pris de boisson, il ne sait ce qu'il dit².

Toutes ces situations imprévues, ces revers rapides sont très comiques. La position des personnages y est changée tout à coup; c'est comme un retournement de balance. S'il est vrai qu'une des causes les plus irrésistibles du rire est le contraste entre un événement et celui que nous attendions, ou la direction imprévue que prend une action, il faut avouer que Hans Sachs sait bien tirer parti de ce moyen comique. En effet, tous ces revirements subits, qui surprennent les personnages autant que les spectateurs et les laissent décontenancés pour un temps, déchaînent les rires unanimes de l'auditoire.

Combien on pourrait en citer d'exemples! C'est l'Inquisiteur qui croyait tenir une bonne proie, une « *vache à lait* »

¹ *Fastn.* 38.

² *Fastn.* 46. Nous retrouvons ce même thème, fréquent au Moyen âge, dans une pièce de Molière: *La jalousie du Barbouillé*. Molière débutant, auteur de farces, ne dédaigne donc pas ces sujets, et il se rencontre ici avec notre poète.

de rare valeur, et qui se voit tromper par moins malin que lui¹. C'est cet homme qui veut punir sa femme et lui montrer qu'il est le maître, et qui se laisse battre lâchement par elle², ou cette jeune femme insatiable qui, voulant extorquer une forte somme à son amant se fait berner par lui³. C'est là un truc comique assez simple et qui ne manque jamais son effet. Aussi Hans Sachs en fait-il un emploi assez fréquent.

Quand l'action ne serait pas assez comique par elle-même, notre poète s'entend à souligner ce qu'elle a d'amusant par un contraste, une opposition marquée entre la situation où le personnage croit se trouver et celle où il se trouve réellement.

Voici un paysan qui s'est chargé de vendre la vache de son compagnon; il est heureux d'en tirer quelque profit, quand patatras, il apprend que c'est sa propre vache qu'il vient de se faire voler bêtement⁴. Ailleurs, l'avare croit posséder une caisse de bijoux précieux, l'ouvre et la trouve pleine de vulgaires cailloux⁵. Et cette femme qui, sans une trop grande confusion, avoue ses fautes à son mari, n'est-elle pas comique dans ses aveux? « *Nun sind ir an dich ye nur siebn* ». « *Nur* », ce mot insignifiant fait à lui seul tout le comique du vers. Un tel aveu devait lui sembler de bien peu d'importance, pour le faire aussi aisément. Mais le mari, lui, n'est pas de cet avis⁶.

Telle jeune femme est persuadée qu'elle ouvre sa porte en secret à un gentilhomme très épris; quelle déception quand elle se trouvera face à face avec un mendiant repoussant et malpropre⁷. Voici le mari qui rentre chez lui, ivre au point de ne pouvoir parler et de se tenir à peine. Ou du moins, sa femme le croit; mais nous savons qu'il feint, et son état d'ébriété nous

¹ *Fastn.* 53.

² *Fastn.* 28.

³ *Fastn.* 23.

⁴ *Fastn.* 25.

⁵ *Fastn.* 32.

⁶ *Fastn.* 38.

⁷ *Fastn.* 40.

met en gaité, en face de la méprise de sa femme qui ne se doute de rien¹. Comme celles d'Aristophane, les vénérables matrones se sont soulevées contre l'autorité, ne pouvant supporter l'idée que désormais chaque homme épousera deux femmes. Quelle horreur!, disent-elles; mais le contraire leur sourit fort et elles voient d'un très bon œil

das ide fraw zwen mender het,
darzw weren wir alle willig.

Fastn. 73: 265/266.

Mais surtout voyez ces paysannes: à l'idée qu'elles vont avoir de belles fourrures toutes neuves, elles dansent en rond autour de la chaudière en chantant un joyeux refrain:

Guet new pelz! gut new pelz wir pringen
Schneweis, schneweis wir frolich singen.

Fastn. 72: 335/336.

Mais alors, quelle déception quand elles verront ce qui nage dans l'eau bouillante! Par contre, quelle joie parmi les spectateurs qui prévoyaient le résultat!

Un moyen comique employé fréquemment aussi par notre poète, consiste à initier le spectateur, au moins en partie, à la farce qu'on va jouer à tel ou tel personnage. Comme confident, il croit prendre lui-même part au bon tour et s'en réjouit davantage. C'est ainsi que Papirius nous dit ses intentions²; nous savons que le sacristain aveugle voit aussi clair que personne³ et que Eulenspiegel n'est pas plus malade que nous⁴. Aussi quelle supériorité sur ceux qui là-bas se laissent duper, parce qu'ils ne « savent » pas!

Il a quelquefois aussi recours à des malentendus et à des équivoques, qui amènent des situations des plus comiques. Ici Eulenspiegel donne aux mots un sens qu'ils ne peuvent avoir dans le cas présent⁵, rappelant ainsi le célèbre Esope, que notre poète connaît bien⁶. Ailleurs une belle-mère, promet à son gendre qui part en voyage, qu'il peut

¹ *Fastn.* 46.

² *Fastn.* 73.

³ *Fastn.* 69.

⁴ *Fastn.* 58.

⁵ *Fastn.* 58: 158/165.

⁶ *Fastn.* 85: 259/278.

être tranquille pendant son absence ; car elles sauront conserver l'honneur de la maison comme elles l'ont toujours fait jusqu'ici. Promesse à double entente, et le spectateur sait à quoi s'en tenir sur la moralité de nos commères¹.

Voici là-bas notre hôtelière qui, sur les conseils d'Eulenspiegel, vient trouver le curé du village: elle parle de l'écu promis; lui qui ne sait mot de ce que notre coquin lui a conté, entend tout autre chose. Le spectateur initié comprend le malentendu et prévoit la catastrophe prochaine².

Les quiproquos entre le médecin et le paysan ignorant sont un des thèmes favoris des anciens *Fastnachtspiele*. Nous les retrouvons aussi une fois chez Hans Sachs dans la farce *Der schwanger Pauer mit dem füel*³, où ces méprises se succèdent pendant plus de cinquante vers, un peu fatigantes pour le goût délicat des modernes. Mais elles devaient provoquer, à l'époque de notre noète, les gros rires des gens simples et rudes, qui composaient surtout son auditoire.

Ailleurs le malentendu paraîtra bien peu vraisemblable et trop recherché; c'est une faiblesse, d'avoir construit toute l'action sur une base aussi imparfaite:

Mein gfaterman, ich pit euch eben,
ir wolt mir ewren zoren geben,
und mein gfeterin zw friden lasen.

Fastn. 82: 153/155.

et l'autre prend ses paroles à la lettre:

Mein zoren ich e auf euch gews
Paide mit rauffen und mit schlagen.

Fastn. 82: 188/190.

Dans la plupart de ces farces, le comique est de la *Schadenfreude*, cette joie maligne qui caractérise l'esprit populaire et qui fait que chacun se réjouit de bon cœur des tours qu'il voit jouer à son prochain. Quand la paysanne dans *Das heiss Eysen*⁴ se brûle les mains, il n'est pas de spectateur, j'imagine, qui ne dise ou ne pense « *C'est bien fait! Elle l'avait bien cherché!* Mais si le curé,

¹ *Fastn.* 74: 30/31; 92.

² *Fastn.* 51: 267/271.

³ *Fastn.* 80.

⁴ *Fastn.* 38.

si la femme infidèle ont mérité leurs aventures, qu'a fait le Ketzermeister, qu'a fait le malheureux mari pour être mis dehors aussi indignement¹. Qu'ont fait à Eulenspiegel les paysannes et les cabaretiers si misérables? Pourquoi les maris trompés font-ils toujours la joie des spectateurs?² La piteuse figure des gens dupés suffit à nous dérider, chacun s'écrie: « c'est bien fait! » La ruse et l'effronterie l'emportent souvent sur le bon droit. Le plus malin a toujours les rieurs de son côté; c'est l'éternelle histoire du Renard et du Bouc. Mais Hans Sachs est trop enfant du peuple pour se laisser arrêter par des scrupules sur ce point de morale: les farces veulent faire rire, tant pis pour la morale distributive si elle n'y trouve pas son compte.

Mais alors, quelle double joie que de voir tromper un trompeur: à malin, malin et demi. Qui ne rirait de Sophia qui a trouvé son maître³?

Comme on le voit, Hans Sachs, soucieux de distraire son public ne néglige rien pour augmenter l'effet comique de ses farces de Carnaval. Ecoutez seulement quels noms portent ses personnages; à eux seuls ils sont tout un poème. Voici les rustres, Hans Flegel, Biertopf, Ula Dolhopf, Eberlein Dildapp, Ulle Lapp . . . Leur gaucherie niaise s'exprime dans les noms de Knoll, Droll, Doll ou Düppel; un paysan pataud peut-il s'appeler autrement que Kuncz Ruebendüenst ou Gröltzenbrey, ou Molkendremel? Comment s'étonner que, dans une société aussi peu polie, il y ait des Ulle Mistfinck, Künckzl Kleyenfurz, Zettenschais, autant de noms qui peignent bien leur monde; mais qui voudrait, qui oserait les traduire? N'est-ce pas déjà un plaisir pour le spectateur que d'entendre appeler de ces noms harmonieux et délicats ceux qu'il voit s'agiter lourdement devant lui?

Puis souvent, ils sont à eux seuls toute une caractéristique de l'individu. C'est Haincz Schewenfried, Klas Wüerf-

¹ *Fastn.* 46 et 53.

² *F.* 54.

³ *Fastn.* 23: 360/362.

fel, le Landfarer Yppocras, Klas Schellentaus, Kuncz Trag-auff, Hirnschrot, Frawenknecht, Kargas, Urban ou Herman Hirnlos. Les femmes répondent aux noms significatifs de Schlappergretdt ou de Schleckmetz.

Çà et là, on trouve aussi chez notre poète quelques jeux de mots. Cependant ce genre de comique un peu extérieur et souvent fade est assez rare dans ses farces, si l'on considère leur quantité. L'Inquisitor devient le *Nequamsiter*¹, Isach est appelé *Sewsack*². Savez-vous ce qu'on appelle un hérétique (*Ketzer*)?

Einer der junge Katzen macht,
Den selben ich für ein Ketzer acht.

Fastn. 53: 249.

C'est un calembour un peu plus fin que celui de ce paysan qui, voulant montrer sa reconnaissance à l'abbé, multiplie les titres choisis et l'appelle sans malice « *eur Feistikeit* »³. D'autres sont moins spirituels; c'est l'emploi fréquent de *Bonen* (*Bohnen*) pour *Bon* (*Bann*)⁴ ou de « *schwarze Kuh* » pour « *schwarze Kunst* »⁵, la confusion entre *Stuhl* et *Schul*⁶, *stehen* et *liegen*⁷, *Schlag* et *Schlagfluss*⁸.

Il faut avouer que notre poète ne se montre pas très fertile dans l'invention des calembours; d'ailleurs il laisse souvent échapper volontairement les traits d'esprit que lui offre sa source. C'est que ce genre de plaisanterie ne convenait guère à son caractère, et il semble que ce soit par inadvertance, ou pour sacrifier au goût du temps, qu'il emprunte çà et là des jeux de mots qu'il n'a pas cherchés. Les quiproquos entre médecin et paysans, où les mots étrangers mal employés prêtent à des équivoques assez scabreuses, ne sont pas de l'invention de Hans Sachs. Il se rattache par là à une longue tradition.

¹ *Fastn.* 53: 125.

² *Fastn.* 80: 130.

³ *Fastn.* 42: 374.

⁴ *Fastn.* 27: 145, 268; *Fastn.* 53: 255; *Fastn.* 65: 265; *Fastn.* 69: 132; *Fastn.* 77: 299.

⁵ *Fastn.* 41: 144.

⁶ *Fastn.* 80: 170/172.

⁷ *Fastn.* 58: 159.

⁸ *Fastn.* 79: 187.

Il obtient certes de meilleurs effets avec ses exorcismes comiques. Ecoutez ce prêtre qui conjure le mauvais esprit, au nom de la pureté des curés, de la fidélité des adultères, et autres vertus aussi bien appliquées¹, ou notre Eulenspiegel qui prononce des paroles cabalistiques pour remettre à néant les fourrures². Partout c'est le double sens qui fait le comique. Le charlatan est plus inventif:

Gaist ich peschwer dich pey pix pax,
Pey flederwisch, hering und lax....

Fastn. 76: 300/301.

Mais les plus amusantes sont sans contredit les formules en latin de cuisine, à double sens aussi et pleines d'inattendu: l'une pour découvrir un voleur³, l'autre pour ramener à de meilleurs sentiments une épouse trop méchante⁴. Voici la femme elle-même, qui, ignorant la signification de ses paroles magiques, appelle sur elle les foudres de son époux:

Truez, aigensinn und clavibus,
Widerpellen und muffibus,
Venit prüegel et fawstibus,
Sueb capite et lentibus!

Fastn. 63: 225/228.

Que de bons vœux elle fait ailleurs pour guérir son mari possédé:

In doribüs et lappibüs
In dölpis et dildappibüs
Dich effen mulieribus!
Dw semper pleibst ein azinüs.
Sürge et stampf hin fües für füs,
Dobsucht nünquäm dich lassen müs.

Fastn. 74: 379/384.

Le mieux, c'est que cette magie ne manque pas son effet, et tout de suite le malheureux époux se sent un peu mieux. La femme aussi se trouve soulagée; car pendant ce temps le compagnon surpris a eu tout le loisir de prendre le large.

Ce latin macaronique très transparent est certes du plus comique effet et s'accorde bien avec la peinture grotesque des personnages. Il ne devait pas manquer d'amuser la ma-

¹ *Fastn. 34: 217/232.*

² *Fastn. 72: 251/260.*

³ *Fastn. 41: 221/224.*

⁴ *Fastn. 64: 309/313.*

porité des spectateurs qui, plus habitués qu'aujourd'hui à l'emploi de cette langue savante, ne laissaient pas échapper la signification de ces formules amusantes et imprévues.

Hans Sachs accentue parfois aussi le comique de ses pièces par une ironie fine et un peu dissimulée. « Je vois, dit l'un à sa voisine, qui vient de perdre son mari, que votre amour pour lui était terriblement grand. » (Elle vient de lui confier qu'elle aurait mieux aimé perdre tout le bétail, c'est-à-dire un oiseau, un chat et un chien, cent souris et une douzaine de rats, sans compter punaises, puces et poux¹.) Quelle affection! Nous l'avons d'ailleurs vue à l'œuvre! Nous savons aussi ce qu'il pense, ce malin écolier, lorsqu'il rassure le paysan:

Laufft hin, sorg nur nicht umb das Pfert,
Das ir ein schaden findet dran,
Das Ross wirt mir recht, lieber man.

Fastn. 22: 224/226.

ou ce chevalier pillard qui se rit de sa victime:

Ach, herr abt, Gott gsegn ewr gnad
Ein monat lang das gut wildbad!
Dünckt euch jetzunder, ir nächst essen.

Fastn. 27: 289/291.

Répondues un peu partout, ces finesses ne manquent pas de charme et effacent un peu les traces de la sottise grossière qui, à la longue, fatiguerait le spectateur².

Mais ce qui, plus que toute autre chose peut-être, rend l'œuvre de Hans Sachs attrayante, ce sont les malices inattendues qui répondent si bien au genre bouffon de ces petits drames. Ayant le caractère d'une improvisation, elles semblent plus naïves, plus naturelles aussi.

Voici Eulenspiegel qui, après avoir joué un mauvais tour aux paysannes, invitera les spectateurs à apporter aussi leurs fourrures à nettoyer:

ob etlich frawen hinen wern,
Die meins pelczwaschens auch pegern,
Die suechen mich in der herberg hie,
Pay eim, der haist, ich wais nicht wie.

Fastn. 72: 391/394

¹ *Fastn.* 60: 238/242.

² *Fastn.* 79: 242/243, 246/247, 232/236.

Ailleurs le chevalier brigand cherchera de même des baigneurs¹. Ici c'est la répartie maligne de l'étudiant: « Tu veux voir le diable? Regarde ta femme! »²; là, la naïveté de ce bouffon, qui entend son maître crier comme un possédé:

Mich dünkt, er wöll gleich narrat wern,
Das sech und hort ich nit vast gern;
Wan wen er gar würt zu aim lappen,
So nem er mir kolben und kappen
Und trüeg sie darnach selber on.

Fastn. 75: 480/485.

Comme dans toutes les pièces bouffonnes, le comique se distingue ici des comédies proprement dites par son caractère improvisé; il ne découle pas uniquement de la marche de l'action, du conflit des caractères ou des complications de la situation, mais surgit tout à coup, inattendu, vif, de la scène présente, provoquant le rire général. C'est justement parce qu'elle n'est ni préparée ni motivée que la malice produit un effet plus comique.

Parfois Hans Sachs a recours à un procédé des plus simples, la dispute. Les disputes entre voisins ou entre époux ont toujours eu beaucoup de succès auprès du peuple. Molière aussi dans ses premières pièces, avant de se donner à la comédie de caractères, cherche dans des scènes de ménage ou des disputes une source de comique. Les batailles ont encore plus de succès: dès qu'on en vient aux mains sur la scène, les spectateurs sont contents et s'amuse de bon cœur. Notre poète d'ailleurs a toujours soin de préparer suffisamment une telle issue, de sorte que la « *Prügelscene* » semble naturelle et fait corps avec l'ensemble, au lieu de paraître factice, ajoutée après coup et extérieure comme dans l'ancienne farce.

Avec lui notons un autre progrès; il fait un emploi très rare des plaisanteries grossières qui révèlent l'art primitif. Il s'y laisse aller une seule fois; la pièce *Der Neidhart mit dem feyhel*³ est une exception dans la série des *Fastnachtspiele* où elle fait vraiment tache.

¹ *Fastn.* 27: 345/349.

² *Fastn.* 37: 189.

³ *Fastn.* 75.

Mais le trait caractéristique du comique de notre poète, c'est l'humour. Il perce dans toute son œuvre, l'âme, la vivifie. C'est lui qui, sous leurs aspects les plus baroques et les plus ridicules, fait agir devant nous des personnages dont la vie est pleine de contradictions; c'est lui qui dévoile la folie du monde, avec une certaine douceur cependant, et toujours avec bonne humeur; c'est l'humour qui dicte à Hans Sachs ses figures grotesques¹.

Notre poète est à son aise ici, comme partout où il peut donner libre cours à sa verve malicieuse. C'est sans doute pour cette raison que ses farces forment la meilleure part de son œuvre.

Avant Hans Sachs, le personnage comique était extérieur à l'action. Il venait sur la scène uniquement pour y réciter des plaisanteries; Hans Sachs comprit que c'était là un comique factice et rudimentaire, et, le premier, il essaya de leur substituer des caractères réels, prenant part à l'intrigue, comiques par leurs actions plutôt que par des bons mots et des calembours.

Il a su imprimer un mouvement plus vif à la pièce, donner çà et là un tour inattendu et comique à l'action; son dialogue est souvent plein de traits humoristiques. Il va parfois même jusqu'à une extravagante gaîté qui se communique aux spectateurs, et ne dédaigne pas, par endroits, une amusante satire. Son humour coule de source et révèle son âme enjouée.

Mais surtout, employant tour à tour ces divers moyens comiques, il a su, consciemment ou non, renouveler sa manière dans chacune de ses pièces et elles offrent une telle variété à ce point de vue aussi, qu'on peut fort bien les lire toutes à la file sans se lasser, car chacune réserve une surprise au lecteur.

Le comique de Hans Sachs a un caractère personnel, une apparence fraîche, sereine, printanière, si l'on peut dire, en même temps qu'il est plein d'un réalisme vigoureux. Quelquefois assez rude, cru, près de la nature, il est toujours

¹ *Fastn.* 80: 339/345, 260/262; *Fastn.* 62: 7/14.

simple comme notre poète lui-même. Hans Sachs ne comprend pas le comique fin et spirituel d'un Boccace. Le rire qu'il soulève n'est pas le rire tout intellectuel du fin connaisseur. Mais ce n'est pas non plus le rire épais de la plaisanterie grasse; c'est le rire bon enfant d'une humanité moyenne en belle humeur, le rire des honnêtes gens; car Hans Sachs s'adresse au brave homme de la classe moyenne, non aux classes élevées de la société. Son ton comique à lui est imprégné de bourgeoisie, de bourgeoisie allemande. Ses pièces, avec leur satire douce, forment un tableau désintéressé et pittoresque de la vie, prise par le côté plaisant.

Ici encore, bien que par l'emploi de personnages comiques empruntés à la vie, il se rapproche de la comédie de mœurs moderne, par cette simplicité et cette rudesse de manières, Hans Sachs tient une place intermédiaire entre l'ancien *Fastnachtspiel*, plein de plaisanteries grossières, et la littérature de la Renaissance, la littérature des humanistes, plus polis, plus raffinés. Place honorable, certes, car dans ce genre nul n'a réussi à faire mieux ni à obtenir de plus réels succès.

CHAPITRE VI

Morale des *Fastnachtspiele*

Y a-t-il chez Hans Sachs des pièces immorales? — Quelques-unes, mais souvent Hans Sachs indique le danger du mal. — Les *Fastnachtspiele* sont une œuvre didactique. — Rapports entre l'homme et Dieu. — Rapports des hommes entre eux: riches et pauvres. — Travers humains. — Vie conjugale. — Education des enfants. — Amitié. — Rapports journaliers des hommes entre eux. — Caractères de cette morale.

S'il est vrai que les *Fastnachtspiele* aient un but comique, cette tendance ne se développe-t-elle pas aux dépens de la bienséance? On a souvent reproché aux farces de Carnaval leur immoralité. Gervinus la flétrit en disant que l'obscénité est l'âme du *Fastnachtspiel* (« *Unanständigkeit ist die Seele des Fastnachtspiels* »). Gœdeke, encore plus sévère, dit: « *Jeder Sprecher ein Schwein, jeder Spruch eine Roheit, jeder Witz eine Unfläterei.* » Chaque personnage un porc, chaque parole une grossièreté, chaque plaisanterie une ordure. C'est vrai pour les farces des siècles précédents. Même chez les prédécesseurs immédiats de Hans Sachs, Hans Folz et Rosenplüt, on répugne à lire des pièces où la grossièreté de la forme s'allie à l'immoralité du fond, bien plus, où s'étale cyniquement le plaisir de mettre à la scène des sujets graveleux. Peut-on faire le même reproche à notre poète? Non. Hâtons-nous de dire que ce n'est pas à ses pièces que les paroles de Gervinus et de Gœdeke peuvent s'appliquer. Les *Fastnachtspiele* de Hans Sachs ne sont jamais obscènes. Nous allons voir que c'était tout à fait contraire au but qu'il se proposait; de plus, serait-il tombé dans la gravelure, que le Conseil de Nuremberg, qui censurait très sévèrement les moindres écrits, aurait bien vite interdit la représentation ou la publication de ses pièces. En vérité, Hans Sachs est beaucoup plus réservé que la plupart des écrivains de son temps; il fait tout ce qu'il peut pour ne pas sortir des limites qu'imposent les convenances honnêtes.

Mais si elles ne semblaient pas immorales de son temps, avouons pourtant que Hans Sachs n'est pas à l'abri de tout reproche quant à la moralité de ses pièces.

Nous ne parlerons pas ici des farces vulgaires où apparaissent çà et là des plaisanteries grossières¹. Elles sont d'ailleurs, disons-le bien vite, une rare exception chez Hans Sachs. Mais nous trouvons des pièces où le poète met à la scène des sujets équivoques, surtout des scènes d'adultère. Lisons *Das Weib im Brunnen*²: la femme, après avoir indignement trompé son mari, l'attire dans un piège grossier et s'arrange de telle sorte que tous donnent tort au malheureux époux. Dans la pièce intitulée *Der Bauer mit dem Plerr*³, coupable du même crime, une autre femme sait écarter d'elle tout soupçon et reçoit même des excuses de son mari. Généralement, le malheureux trop confiant ou trop simple, est trompé d'aussi indigne façon⁴.

Ce qui nous choque, ce qui blesse notre sentiment moral dans ces farces, c'est le ravalement, la raillerie du bien au profit du mal, qui, triomphant, quitte la scène la tête haute. Si le vice n'y est pas loué directement, il ne l'est pas moins en réalité, car il a les rieurs de son côté.

Il ne faudrait pas, pour justifier notre poète, prétendre qu'on peut tirer de chacune de ses pièces un enseignement moral. Quelle pièce ne s'y prêterait pas, si immorale soit-elle? Une telle conclusion aurait un danger réel, car elle tendrait à abriter sous une apparence recommandable des œuvres immorales.

Peut-être Hans Sachs pensait-il que ces quelques farces légères ne pouvaient pas corrompre ses auditeurs, pas plus que Boccace, infiniment plus dangereux, ne l'avait corrompu lui-même.

¹ *Fastn.* 75, 80.

² *Fastn.* 46.

³ *Fastn.* 54.

⁴ *Fastn.* 61, 74.

Cependant Dufloû remarque avec raison¹ que chacune de ces farces immorales est, la plupart du temps, suivie d'une autre qui en est comme la contre-partie et tend à atténuer l'effet regrettable de la première. C'est ainsi qu'après *Der Bauer mit dem Plerr* du 12 octobre 1553, Hans Sachs écrit le 24 octobre de la même année, *Die Bürgerin mit dem Thumbherrn*², où l'héroïne que possède le démon, éprouve, sur les conseils de sa mère, l'indulgence de son mari, pour le mystifier ensuite avec plus de tranquillité. Bientôt punie et persuadée du danger qu'elle court, elle se promet de rester vertueuse. De même, à la pièce intitulée *Das weinende Hündlein*³ du 25 janvier 1554, succède quelques jours plus tard *Der alt wol erzawst pueler mit seinr zauberey*⁴, où un paysan qui s'avise d'être amoureux reçoit sur la scène même une correction magistrale; il est présenté de façon si grotesque que le spectateur se promet de ne pas tomber dans un tel ridicule.

Ainsi, souvent une pièce à tendance morale nette semble vouloir effacer l'impression produite par la précédente. Peut-être Hans Sachs, poussé par son honnêteté naturelle, a-t-il voulu par là-même, diminuer autant que possible l'influence néfaste de l'une en lui opposant aussitôt, dans le même ordre d'idées, une pièce de direction tout à fait contraire.

De plus, dans les morceaux mêmes où le vice est vainqueur, Hans Sachs ne manque pas de faire remarquer ça et là ce qu'il en coûte à se mal conduire et ce qu'on y risque. « On y perd son honneur » avoue la paysanne⁵, et de plus sa tranquillité; « les tracas m'ont rendue toute blanche⁶ », dit-elle.

¹ G. DUFLOU: *Hans Sachs als Moralist in den Fastnachtspielen*. (Z. f. d. Ph. 25.)

² *Fastn.* 56.

³ *Fastn.* 61.

⁴ *Fastn.* 62.

⁵ « Wird jetzt mein schalckheit offenbar,

Erst nimbt mein ehr ein untergang. »

Fastn. 54: 59/62.

⁶ « Ich bin schir graw worden vor sorgen. »

Fastn. 54: 65.

Elle ne s'expose pas moins pour cela à une punition méritée; aussi se promet-elle de ne plus recommencer. Pour être heureux et ne pas devenir la risée de tout le pays, ne quittons pas le droit chemin.

Ce danger, cette justice immanente que le pécheur sent peser sur lui atténuent certes l'influence pernicieuse de la pièce. Combien de personnages, au moment de commettre une mauvaise action se sentent pris de scrupules; et s'ils n'ont pas la force de résister à la tentation, du moins leurs craintes, le pressentiment du danger qu'ils courent, les remords qui les saisissent après la faute commise¹ sont une indication nette des intentions de l'auteur: on ne fait pas le mal impunément. On court des risques: tôt ou tard on sera puni. En attendant notre conscience nous harcèle et ne nous laisse pas de repos.

Quant aux proverbes immoraux qui échappent exceptionnellement à notre poète, il est trop évident qu'il nous les donne en plaisantant, pour ce qu'ils valent, sans les recommander. Un prêtre peu digne dira « *ein verzagt Herz bußt kein schön Frawen* »² ou

« *Wer ein frawen schon*

wil pueln, mues vorhin pueln den man ».

Ailleurs, c'est à un gibier de potence que Hans Sachs fera dire:

« *Senfftr ist eyd schwern denn ruben graben* »³, indiquant ainsi assez clairement quelle valeur il prête à cette expression. Ce n'est qu'une façon vivante de caractériser avec plus de couleur le personnage. Le poète en fait d'ailleurs, dans la foule des autres expressions proverbiales nettement morales, un emploi assez rare pour qu'on le considère comme exceptionnel et ne s'y arrête pas davantage.

Il faut de même remarquer que les farces immorales dont nous avons parlé, sont en très petit nombre: quatre seulement sur quatre-vingt-une; elles disparaissent dans la

¹ *Fastn.* 74: 97/99; *Fastn.* 70: 170; *Fastn.* 37:53/59 et 66/67.

² *Fastn.* 43: 71.

³ *Fastn.* 69: 85.

⁴ *Fastn.* 59: 106.

foule des autres à tendance inverse. Aussi peut-on dire que Hans Sachs a épuré le *Fastnachtspiel* de toutes les grossièretés qui s'y étalaient avant lui.

Bien plus, loin d'être une école d'immoralité, les farces ont une tendance nettement didactique. Pour Hans Sachs, un des devoirs les plus impérieux de la poésie, c'est de rendre l'homme meilleur. C'est dans un sens tout à fait luthérien qu'il croit à ce rôle moralisateur de la poésie. La plupart de ses pièces, même celles que distingue une folle gaîté, ne manquent pas çà et là d'une certaine gravité que justifie l'apologue. Car le poète a toujours en vue son double but : amuser et moraliser. D'ailleurs le rire ne peut-il avoir une fonction morale ? Tuer par le rire les défauts incompatibles avec la vie sociale, corriger les mœurs en riant, n'est-ce pas faire œuvre de moraliste ?

En dehors même des pièces qui sont de pures moralités, Hans Sachs met de la morale partout où il peut. Il subit en cela l'influence de son époque. Gengenbach déjà s'était engagé dans cette voie, d'ailleurs sans aucune action dramatique. Sébastien Brant et les nombreux prédicateurs, moralistes aussi, créent autour du poète une atmosphère qui ne sera pas sans influence sur lui. En tout cas, il est le premier qui ait transformé la scène en une chaire laïque d'où retentissent des sermons pleins de vie et de force d'entraînement.

Dès le début de sa carrière, aussitôt après son retour à Nuremberg, Hans Sachs se rend compte de la force morale et de la valeur éducatrice que peut renfermer une œuvre dramatique, et consacre dès lors une grande partie de son génie au drame. Car son but dernier est d'améliorer la masse en l'amusant, de poursuivre et de punir le vice, *alles Unheils Ziehpflaster*. Mais il savait que la voix souvent désagréable d'un prédicateur se perdrait sans effet au milieu du bruit de la foule, et il donna pour cela ses soins à ce genre de drames où apparaît tout son talent et qui est le genre préféré des masses populaires, au *Fastnachtspiel*.

Pour être persuadé de la noble tâche que s'est proposée Hans Sachs, il suffira de voir comment il transforme un récit immoral. On sait avec quelle prédilection il emprunte ses sujets au *Décameron* de Boccace; mais il s'arrange pour y trouver une utilité pratique, pour en dégager un enseignement simple et accessible à tous. Il aime avant tout à éliminer toute immoralité du sujet que lui offre sa source. Ainsi dans la pièce intitulée *Der Pauer im Fegefeuer*¹ la tendance devient nettement différente. Boccace nous présente un curé qui, pour jouir sans péril des faveurs de la paysanne, endort son mari et lui fait croire qu'il est au purgatoire. Le curé de Hans Sachs est au contraire un brave homme désintéressé, dont le but très louable sera de corriger le paysan de sa jalousie aveugle et de rétablir le bonheur du ménage². Cette transformation du sujet montre assez le désir de notre poète de faire une œuvre moralement aussi irréprochable que possible. La même intention ressort d'autres changements très nombreux, surtout dans les détails, non seulement de fond, mais aussi de forme, pour éliminer toute immoralité et accentuer les traits moraux des pièces.

Sous sa plume, des anecdotes insignifiantes deviennent des moralités³; conservant à d'autres leur caractère comique, il ajoute sans hésitation une fin morale⁴. Cette tendance didactique est même quelquefois si forte chez notre poète, qu'elle recule à l'arrière-plan toute autre préoccupation et repousse même les plus élémentaires exigences de l'action dramatique⁵. Dans de telles conditions, il ne nous offre plus qu'une action insipide, et dont la morale, toujours au premier plan, détruit tout le charme⁶.

Le plus souvent pourtant Hans Sachs moraliste essaye de concilier l'action dramatique avec son intention didactique;

¹ *Fastn.* 42.

² *Fastn.* 42. Comparer aussi avec leurs sources *Fastn.* 35, 45, 84, où apparaît la même préoccupation.

³ *Fastn.* 19.

⁴ *Fastn.* 16, 28, 41, 81, 83.

⁵ *Fastn.* 24, 26, 47, 68.

⁶ *Fastn.* 31.

il nous donne alors un *Fastnachtspiel* plein de vie, où le comique ne perd aucun de ses droits. La morale, voilée, domine le tout, dégagée avec plus d'évidence par la conclusion; ou bien, à peine sensible dans toute la pièce, elle n'apparaît qu'à la fin, exprimée clairement par le héraut ou un des personnages, afin que nul ne s'avise de donner à la farce une fausse interprétation.

Quelquefois, il semble oublier que c'est une pièce qu'il écrit, et la morale, à la fin, prend les proportions exagérées d'un sermon en trois points principaux: 1° évitez de.... 2° méfiez-vous de.... 3° gardez-vous de.... qu'il énonce d'une façon un peu pédante¹. Il la délaye parfois sans aucun intérêt² et se laisse même entraîner si loin par ses intentions de moraliste qu'il rattache à la pièce des conclusions qui ne touchent que de loin au sujet traité³, qui sont même en contradiction avec tout le reste du débat⁴.

Quant à tous les détails capables d'augmenter l'impression morale générale, Hans Sachs y apporte tous ses soins, Avec tous les procédés de son art, il sait, d'une main habile, les mettre en valeur, faire ressortir les suites d'une mauvaise action, mettre en relief le mal par contraste avec le bien, choisir pour juge ou pour censeur un personnage libre de faute. Surtout et avant tout, il sait faire du personnage coupable non pas un mannequin sans réalité, qui ne craint pas le châtiment, mais un homme comme on en rencontre tous les jours, dans lequel le spectateur et l'humanité tout entière se retrouvera, avec ses aspirations et ses défauts, et qui sera pour tous un exemple vivant de vice puni ou de vertu récompensée.

Les *Fastnachtspiele* de Hans Sachs seront donc, pour le lecteur comme pour le spectateur, une collection de préceptes de morale pratique, que lui dicte son expérience et qui doivent nous accompagner dans la vie de tous les jours.

¹ *Fastn.* 73, 19.

² *Fastn.* 63.

³ *Fastn.* 19, *Fastn.* 16.

⁴ *Fastn.* 1: 385.

Voyons tout d'abord quels sont, chez notre poète les rapports de l'homme avec Dieu. Pour Hans Sachs comme pour Luther, Dieu revêt une apparence humaine; c'est le Père de l'humanité tout entière, qui aime tendrement ses enfants, plein d'une bonté infinie à leur égard et toujours prêt à pardonner. Pourquoi le craindre? Hans Sachs a en lui une confiance toute filiale. Comme Luther, il vit avec lui en communion directe et l'aborde comme un fils. Dans la pièce intitulée *Wie Gott der Herr Adam und Eva ihre Kinder segnet*¹, Hans Sachs nous fait de Dieu le portrait d'un brave père de famille qui, regrettant peut-être lui-même sa sévérité, vient rendre visite à ses enfants. Quelle bonhomie, quelle douceur dans chacune de ses paroles! Il questionne les enfants, leur donne sa bénédiction et leur promet la Rédemption. Ayons confiance: le pardon viendra à son heure. Certes Dieu paraît plus gêné de cette courte entrevue que les deux pécheurs eux-mêmes!

Pourtant les hommes, souvent égoïstes, l'oublient dans les heures de prospérité, et ne se souviennent de Dieu que lorsqu'ils ont besoin de lui; alors Dieu punit parfois; s'il envoie aux hommes des épreuves, c'est que ceux-ci les ont méritées. C'est un moyen de leur rappeler ce qu'ils sont et ce qu'ils doivent à leur Créateur. Sans ces malheurs (qui ne sont que des remèdes), ils oublieraient trop vite leur Père et la reconnaissance qu'ils lui doivent.

Weil mein die welt in gueten dagen
vergist und wil mir nit dancksagen,
so wil ich ain anders anfahen,
Sie mit mancherley plagen schlafen.
Wil sües nit, so mues sawer helfen.

Fastn. 67: 215 sq.

Il est juste qu'il punisse déjà dans ce monde, lui qui un jour nous jugera tous. Aussi ce Dieu de bonté et de justice a-t-il droit à notre soumission. Celle de Hans Sachs est parfaite et entière comme l'est sa confiance:

Was Gott thüet, das ist wol geton.

Fastn. 60: 179.

¹ *Fastn.* 52.

Mais cette soumission aveugle à la volonté de Dieu, comment s'accordera-t-elle avec le libre arbitre? Ne va-t-elle pas l'abolir tout à fait pour faire de l'homme un croyant certes, mais un croyant passif? Non; Hans Sachs croit à la liberté de l'homme. Bien que l'expression *Das waltzend Glück* revienne fréquemment dans ses pièces, désignant une puissance aveugle, capricieuse, qui tantôt comble l'homme de ses faveurs et tantôt l'abandonne, il ne faut pas lui donner une importance qu'elle n'a pas. Il semble que ce soit là plutôt un souvenir de l'Antiquité qui poursuit Hans Sachs très versé dans la littérature ancienne. Au contraire, il est persuadé que l'homme est moralement libre. Dans la pièce intitulée *Der Kampff fraw Armuet mit fraw Glüeck*¹, il représente le malheur attaché à un pieu, d'où chacun peut à volonté le détacher. Chacun est par conséquent l'auteur de sa propre destinée et la choisit lui-même.

Comment concilier cette liberté avec la communion en Dieu? Des hommes aussi actifs, aussi fortement trempés que Hans Sachs et Luther, des esprits aussi hardis ne peuvent certes renoncer à leur moi, dont ils ont une conscience nette. Leur bon sens pratique, leur piété toute virile ne leur permet pas de s'abandonner à l'inaction contemplative; la vie future ne leur fait pas oublier la tâche qu'ils ont à remplir ici-bas. Aussi l'homme, artisan de son bonheur et de son malheur, sera-t-il pour Hans Sachs responsable de ses fautes.

Celles-ci recevront dans les *Fastnachtspiele*, non pas le nom de *péché*, c'est-à-dire d'offense envers Dieu, mais celui de *folie*, c'est-à-dire d'offense envers le bon sens. A elle seule, cette qualification de folie est pour le méchant une punition qui l'atteint déjà sur terre². Sachons donc être des sages.

Hans Sachs n'épargne pas ses peines pour prodiguer à son prochain les meilleurs conseils, pour indiquer à chacun le moyen d'être heureux. Il s'adresse à tous les milieux: riches et

¹ *Fastn.* 68.

² *Fastn.* 68: 315.

pauvres, femmes et hommes, jeunes et vieux, vilains et bourgeois, puissants et opprimés; personne n'est oublié.

Et tout d'abord, pourquoi chacun est-il mécontent de son sort? Les pauvres se plaignent que leur travail est pénible et envie le voisin plus heureux; ne faut-il pas des faibles et des puissants, des empereurs et des cordonniers¹? Chacun a besoin de l'autre et nul ne peut se passer du travail de ses concitoyens. Au fond d'ailleurs, toutes les conditions se valent:

Es ist ein standt gleich wie der ander,
Sie sindt müselig allesander. *Fastn.* 52: 375/376.

Il n'est pas certain que les puissants et les riches soient plus heureux. Damoclès n'a-t-il pas été persuadé dès la première épreuve, que le bonheur du tyran est plus apparent que réel et que sous un vain faste bien des tourments sont cachés? Diogène a bien raison de préférer son sort à celui d'Alexandre.

Hans Sachs, lui aussi, est un sage. Il sait se contenter de son sort et y trouver la paix de sa vie. L'argent ne fait pas le bonheur; il ne se trouve que dans la vertu (*Frümkeit*)². Contentement passe richesse, affirme le poète, et nous pouvons l'en croire, car il est sincère et donne lui-même l'exemple³.

Il voudrait faire plus encore, et tente un rapprochement entre riches et pauvres. Que le riche s'abstienne de ces airs de grand seigneur qui le font détester; qu'il soit doux et aimable envers les malheureux:

Forthin wil ich leutselig sein,
in wort und wercken lindt und sidtsam,
.....
Grusspar und freundtlich jederman;
So wirt ich auch lieb und angem.

Fastn. 26: 370/375.

Les pauvres, de leur côté, resteront toujours laborieux, fidèles à la vertu et rejetteront de leur cœur la haine du riche qui les dessèche. L'un travaillera pour l'autre.

¹ *Fastn.* 52: 349/363.

² *Fastn.* 30: 430.

³ *Fastn.* 52: 349/363.

Il y a deux vices surtout que Hans Sachs voudrait voir disparaître à tout jamais et contre lesquels il s'élève avec toute sa verve satirique: c'est l'avarice et la prodigalité.

Quelle folie de vouloir amasser toujours davantage et de reculer devant les dépenses les plus utiles par amour de l'or! Non seulement cette sottise rend malheureux celui qu'elle domine et tous les membres de sa famille, mais elle est encore la source de bien d'autres vices, qui entraînent de nombreux maux à leur suite¹. Notre poète ne se lasse pas de le répéter sur tous les tons. Avec les caractères féminins, ce sont les avares, semble-t-il, qu'il représente le plus volontiers. Peut-être parce qu'il y trouve un plus grand plaisir, peut-être aussi parce que le hasard en avait placé des types intéressants autour de lui.

La sottise inverse, la prodigalité, n'est pas moindre. Elle fait le malheur de celui qui en est atteint et le ruine bientôt avec tous les siens². Sachons donc écouter notre raison et garder en tout un juste milieu³; nous éviterons ainsi une foule infinie de maux.

Malheureusement ce ne sont pas là les seuls vices qui conduisent l'homme à sa perte. Aussi Hans Sachs qui connaît bien l'humanité avec tous ses travers, va-t-il s'efforcer dans toutes ses farces populaires de les flageller tous, d'en dépeindre le ridicule, le meilleur moyen sans doute d'amener les hommes à se corriger.

Avec quelle indignation ne flétrit-il pas l'ivrognerie, ce vice infect qui ravale l'homme au rang du pourceau! Avec quelle laideur dégradante ne fait-il pas agir devant nous ces vils personnages, pour nous inspirer le dégoût d'un vice aussi immonde. Non contente d'ailleurs d'avilir l'homme, cette passion funeste fait aussi le malheur des siens. Car tandis que l'ivrogne fait passer par son gosier tout le pa-

¹ *Fastn.* 7: 188/190.

² « (Er hat)und oberflüssig geben auss
Ohn noth und nutz, zu pomp und bracht
Sich, weyb und kinder arm gemacht. »

Fastn. 50: 235/237.

³ *Fastn.* 7: 85: « Ein Mittel mass ist recht und gut. »

trimoine, femme et enfants vont nu-pieds, réduits à la misère la plus noire¹. Et les malheureux, pour prix de leurs privations, doivent encore subir sans mot dire, les caprices et les violences de cette brute qui n'a plus rien d'humain².

Ailleurs le poète s'élève contre la folie du jeu: moins laide que l'intempérance, elle n'est pas moins dangereuse³; le joueur perd son bien, emprunte et ne peut rendre, vole et tombe avec sa famille dans une profonde indigence. Rien ne le guérit⁴.

Le plus redoutable de tous ces fléaux, la pire ennemie des hommes, c'est dame Paresse, cette femme aux traits aimables, qui trouve toujours de bonnes raisons pour nous retenir au lit⁵ ou retarder le moment du travail⁶. Aussi quel intérieur que celui du fainéant: il ne pense guère à ses enfants et se soucie peu de savoir si demain il y aura du pain à la maison⁷.

Mais c'est surtout à une mode particulière que Hans Sachs fait la guerre, parce que, avec des airs inoffensifs, elle entraîne les ouvriers aux pires vices; c'est saint Lundi, le fléau de tous les ateliers, qui, après tout un long dimanche

¹ « Ich füel mein wanst und wasch mein kragen.
Las weib und kind am hungertüch nagen. »

Fastn. 64: 175.

² « Ich thw ir oft mit feusten wincken
Wen ich haim kumb um miternacht. »

Fastn. 64: 178.

³ *Fastn.* 66: 16/19.

⁴ « Es hört nit auff des spilers hand
Hat er nit geld, so setzt er pfandt,
Hat er nit pfandt, so braucht er dück
Und machet sehr vil böser stück
mit stelen, rauben und abtragen. »

Fastn. 5: 388/392.

⁵ « Ey, liebe Gredt, es ist frü gnug
Weil noch kein han noch henn abflug. »

Fastn. 34: 27/28.

⁶ « Ich mag ie hewt arbeiten nicht. »

Fastn. 64: 28.

« Wil anhebn zu arbeiten morgen,
Wan es ist die wochen noch lang. »

Fastn. 64: 40/41.

⁷ « Morgen (ist es nit schand und spot)
Ist die sün e im haus dens prot. »

Fastn. 64: 245/246.

passé au cabaret à boire à l'envi, à jouer et à faire bombance, y attire encore la plupart d'entre eux le lendemain et souvent encore le mardi¹. Il ne faudra pas s'étonner alors si, à la fin de la semaine, la paye est maigre et insuffisante aux besoins de la famille:

Ich und der klainen kinder hauffen,
Parfues und wol halb nackat lauffen, ...
...Sag, wofon solen wir doch zern?
Hab wir ie kain pfening im haus.

Fastn. 64: 33/37.

se demande la mère désolée. La misère, dans de telles conditions, est inévitable; car la paresse est la mère de tous les vices: elle entraîne à sa suite maint désordre redoutable: ivrognerie, jeu et leurs compagnons habituels.

Pourquoi redouter le travail? Il est naturel et nécessaire, sain pour le corps comme pour l'esprit². Il distrait, prépare un bon sommeil et assaisonne les mets. D'ailleurs Dieu n'a-t-il pas créé l'homme pour travailler³? C'est donc notre devoir et notre intérêt de nous arracher à une oisiveté dangereuse.

Hans Sachs ne s'attache pas seulement à combattre des vices aussi généralement reconnus que ceux-ci; il s'adresse à tous ceux, d'apparence plus bénigne, qui entraînent l'homme loin de la raison et du devoir, et par leurs conséquences sont souvent redoutables pour tout le monde.

C'est la colère, folie qui aveugle l'homme et l'entraîne aux pires excès, à des violences qu'il ne tardera pas à regretter, mais quand il sera trop tard pour réparer le mal. C'est l'envie, ce vice aussi laid que honteux, qui fait regarder d'un œil jaloux tout ce qui arrive d'heureux aux autres, tandis que leur malheur nous réjouit au fond du cœur⁴.

¹ « Thuet den ertag zumb montag feyren,
In wirczheusern und kellern umb leyren. » *Fastn.* 64: 9/10

² « So ist mein arbeit mir gesund,
Macht mich lustig, munter und rund
All ungnad arbeit ich von mir. »

Fastn. 15: 287/289; cf. *Fastn.* 52: 387/390.

³ « Zu arbeit ich den menschen klug
Beschuff, wie den vogel zum flug. » *Fastn.* 52: 391/392.

⁴ « Neidt ist das schnödst laster auff erden. »

Fastn. 17: 187.

Voilà de bien vilains défauts; bien plus, ce sont de véritables maladies, dont on peut se guérir avec un peu de volonté. Si vous n'essayez pas de vous corriger, vous serez jusqu'à votre dernier soupir, la risée du monde et l'ennemi de Dieu¹.

L'ambition malsaine, cette avidité de monter toujours plus haut et de se dépasser toujours soi-même, elle non plus ne laisse jamais l'homme en repos². Elle est la source de bien des maux pour toute l'humanité. N'est-elle pas la cause première de la guerre, ce fléau qui désole le monde en tout temps et ne connaît de bornes que celles de l'univers même? Quant à l'ambitieux, il ne trouve jamais le bonheur, ni même le repos de l'âme. Qu'il apprenne donc à maîtriser ses caprices; la raison l'aidera, et dans une situation modeste il trouvera le bonheur qu'il cherche bien loin³.

Un autre vice que Hans Sachs dénoncera souvent, c'est la malhonnêteté; non pas celle qui fait métier de dérober à autrui ce qu'il possède (les chevaliers d'industrie se riraient trop des leçons de morale de notre poète), mais ce manque de probité caché et si fréquent, qui fait que, aidé par un hasard bienveillant, chacun s'adjuge un objet trouvé ou dérobe çà et là de menus objets sans grande valeur. Ces gens continuent à croire et à faire croire à leur probité foncière, raison suffisante pour que Hans Sachs s'élève avec énergie et mette en garde contre un tel défaut, car, dit-il, bien mal acquis ne profite jamais⁴.

Il s'attaque à tous les travers humains sans dédaigner les plus petits: c'est la curiosité, péché féminin par excellence, toujours punie, comme le fut la cabaretière par Eulenspiegel⁵.

¹ *Fastn.* 17: 265/268.

² « Je mehr du hast, je mehr du gerst. » *Fastn.* 44, 139.

³ « Derhalb so bin vil reicher ich,
Wann ich lass mich an dem benügen,
Was mir Gott und Natur thut fügen,
Hab mantel, taschen, stab und schw,
Nit mehr ich auch begeren thu. » *Fastn.* 44: 150/154.

⁴ *Fastn.* 77: 318.

⁵ *Fastn.* 72: 71/76.

ou la mère de Papirius Cursor¹. La curiosité va souvent de pair avec le bavardage. Aussi sachez tenir votre langue, et si vous voulez que vos secrets soient bien gardés, ne les confiez ni à votre femme, ni à vos enfants². Gardez-vous aussi de vous mêler des affaires d'autrui³ ou de critiquer à tort et à travers tout ce que vous voyez, car il pourrait vous en cuire.

Ces conseils, il est vrai, ne portent que sur des menus faits de la vie journalière; ils n'en sont pas moins importants pour cela; car ce ne sont pas ceux qu'on ignore ou qu'on oublie le moins souvent. Pourtant, en les suivant, l'homme pourrait s'épargner bien des désagréments qui lui rendent la vie de tous les jours désagréable et difficile. Et n'est-ce pas de détails que la vie est faite?

Mais le thème favori de Hans Sachs, celui auquel il reviendra pendant toute sa carrière dramatique, c'est le thème double en apparence, mais unique au fond, de l'amour et du mariage. L'amour n'apporte que grandes douleurs, mêlées à de maigres plaisirs⁴. Aussi méfiez-vous de ses traits envenimés, ne vous laissez pas duper par des femmes de mauvaise vie, qui, malgré leurs belles paroles ne songent qu'à se moquer de vous et à vous soutirer vos beaux écus⁵. Réservez votre affection pour le mariage, le seul amour permis:

Spardt euer lieb biss in die eh,
Denn habt ein lieb, sunst keine meh,
Die selbig lieb, die ist mit ehrn,
Wie uns die heylich schrift ist lern. »

Fastn. 1: 383/386.

Tel est le conseil plein d'un sérieux précoce, avec lequel dès janvier 1518, notre poète fait ses débuts sur la scène comique. Il avait d'ailleurs déjà traité ce sujet⁶ et ne se

¹ *Fastn.* 73: 384/390.

² *Fastn.* 73: 392.

³ *Fastn.* 66: 323/326.

⁴ « Wann lieb ist nichts denn bitter leiden,
Vermischet gar mit kleinen freyden. »

Fastn. 1: 91/92.

⁵ *Fastn.* 84: 457/460.

⁶ Kampfgespräch « von der lieb », 1^{er} mai 1515.

lasse pas de revenir à cet avertissement avec une insistance toujours nouvelle¹. Car Hans Sachs, comme Luther, croit à la sainteté de cette institution divine, à la religion de la famille. S'il a dans plus d'une de ses farces, raillé les époux et surtout les épouses, s'il a dépeint les mille « joies » du ménage avec des couleurs crues et un peu outrées, c'était, nous l'avons vu, pour reprendre un des sujets favoris de la farce ancienne, pour les besoins de la cause comique, non certes pour prêcher le célibat, ni parce qu'il considérait la vie domestique comme un enfer. Nous savons aujourd'hui et par lui-même, quel ménage heureux et paisible fut le sien: il en fait un tableau sincère dans le *Panegyrique d'une femme vertueuse*².

Mais pour qu'un tel intérieur soit possible, il faut que chacun des deux époux y mette du sien et consente à faire des concessions, tout en ne déviant pas de son devoir. La femme sera docile, soumise à son mari; douce et patiente, si après une journée de dur labeur, aigri par quelque difficulté, il laisse échapper des paroles un peu vives. Elle le consolera dans ses peines, prendra soin de l'intérieur, restera en bonne ménagère à son foyer, ne perdra pas son temps à jaboter avec les voisines, oubliant son ménage, son mari et ses enfants.

Car la femme qui, dans tout le Moyen âge, et encore à la période précédente, objet du culte de la poésie chevaleresque, avait été entourée d'une auréole divine par les poètes courtois, revient chez Hans Sachs, comme chez tous les écrivains de la fin du Moyen âge, tenir sa place au foyer. Elle y revient en bourgeoise pour reprendre prosaïquement son rôle de brave mère de famille.

Qu'elle soit donc réservée dans ses paroles comme dans ses manières, pour ne pas éveiller la jalousie de son mari. Lui, à son tour, s'efforcera par sa conduite, de mériter et de conserver l'affection de son épouse: bon ouvrier que ne

¹ Cf. *Fastn.* 6: 179/181; *Fastn.* 8: 267/268.

² « Das frawenlob eines biderweybs. » Keller IV, 370.

rebut pas le travail, bon époux et bon père de famille, il ne délaissera pas son foyer pour aller retrouver au cabaret des compagnons de débauche. Si la place prépondérante lui revient de droit dans le ménage, parce qu'il est le plus raisonnable, du moins il ne devra pas faire un mauvais emploi de sa force. Ce n'est pas une autorité tyrannique que Hans Sachs concède au mari, car la femme, elle aussi, a des droits, mais un ascendant moral justifié par sa supériorité et basé sur l'estime. C'est à lui d'ailleurs de faire l'éducation de son épouse par des paroles sensées et affectueuses¹.

Chacun des deux, pour que le bon accord soit possible, restera fidèle à ses devoirs. Tous deux se garderont bien de se laisser aller au vice de l'impureté, ce crime honteux qui fait les mauvais ménages et le malheur des enfants, et supprime tout lien d'affection entre les époux. L'infidèle lui-même n'est pas heureux. Il nous raconte ses peines et ne nous cache pas qu'il est la risée de tout le pays, et souvent paye cher ses sottises. D'autres fois nous sommes témoins de ses tourments et pouvons voir nous-mêmes quelles sont les punitions d'une mauvaise conduite². Cet exemple vivant sera sans doute un avertissement durable pour le spectateur, comme celui du curé obligé de jouer le rôle du diable³ ou celui du vieux galant avec le sortilège⁴, ou même le moine surpris par le sacristain aveugle⁵. Les femmes, même les plus rusées, ne s'en tirent pas toujours à bon compte, et subissent parfois un châtiment bien mérité⁶. Pour notre honneur, pour notre intérêt comme pour celui de notre ménage, sachons donc rester fidèles à notre foyer.

Gardons-nous aussi, dit notre poète, de la jalousie, ce fléau fréquent qui fait le malheur des deux époux. C'est sans aucune raison, le plus souvent, que nous concevons des

¹ *Fastn.* 12: 373/379.

² « Wie du rückling gehst stigen ab. »

Fastn. 5: 314.

³ *Fastn.* 37.

⁴ *Fastn.* 62.

⁵ *Fastn.* 69.

⁶ *Fastn.* 38.

soupçons; ensuite nous ne pouvons plus les chasser de notre cœur et ils nous rendent la vie intolérable:

Kein grösser sünd kam nie auff erdt
Denn eyffern. . .

Fastn. 42: 430/431.

nous dit-il¹, et il se charge de montrer tout le ridicule d'un homme qui, épiait les moindres gestes de son épouse, fait une montagne des propos les plus inoffensifs et souffre sans raison le plus cruel martyre. Aussi Hans Sachs considère-t-il la jalousie comme une maladie; on peut s'en guérir en écoutant la voix sage de la raison². Méfiez-vous, ajoute-t-il comme dernier avertissement; si vous ne vous guérissez point, vous attirerez vous-mêmes le mal que vous craignez tant³.

Sachons donc nous corriger de nos défauts, si nous voulons nous préparer un intérieur heureux et paisible, et ne rejetons pas sans cesse la faute sur notre conjoint. Que chacun accomplisse ses devoirs et prouve son affection autrement que par des paroles; car l'amour fait naître l'amour⁴.

Ces conseils qu'il donne aux époux révèlent l'observation profonde de notre poète. Nous ne doutons pas que, de son échoppe, il ait eu fréquemment l'occasion de remarquer la cause réelle des brouilles qui s'élevaient dans tel ou tel ménage voisin. C'est le fruit d'une longue expérience qu'il offre aux jeunes ménages, dans ses farces de Carnaval.

On a pu remarquer que dans la lutte qu'il engage contre tous les vices, notre poète ne se contente pas de punir ses personnages en leur infligeant sous nos yeux une correction justement méritée, ou en leur promettant un châtiment éternel après leur mort. Le plus souvent, et en cela il fait preuve d'une profonde connaissance de la psychologie humaine, c'est par le ridicule qu'il combat les travers humains. La raillerie cinglante ne peut manquer de toucher le coupable. Le spectateur rit aux dépens du personnage, comme on rira de lui-même, s'il se laisse aller un jour aux mêmes travers ou si on

¹ Cf. *Fastn.* 45.

² *Fastn.* 17: 78/88.

³ *Fastn.* 45: 283/284.

⁴ *Fastn.* 60: 21/24.

savait que déjà il lui ressemble. Comment ne se promettrait-on pas d'éviter le même ridicule, comment ne pas se corriger? Surtout quand Hans Sachs prend soin de nous indiquer, et avec quelle minutie, les correctifs de nos travers, et faisant appel à notre raison, nous trace le chemin à suivre pour être heureux, vertueux et ne pas donner prise à la raillerie.

Mais notre poète est homme; il sait combien il est difficile d'arracher de notre âme les vices qui s'y sont glissés et enracinés depuis de longues années. Il faut s'y prendre quand il en est temps encore, si l'on veut guérir complètement de la folie qui s'empare des humains. Aussi ne se lasse-t-il pas de rappeler aux parents que c'est à eux de préparer l'avenir de leur petite famille, à eux de détruire de bonne heure tous les germes de vices dans le cœur de leurs enfants.

Sonder auffziecht sie in der jugent
Auff Gottes forcht, sitten und tugent!

Biegt sie, weil sie zu biegen sindt *Fastn.* 5: 488/490.

L'habitude donne plus de force aux passions, et bientôt ils ne pourraient plus se corriger¹. Gardez-vous surtout d'une indulgence coupable, qui laisserait s'épanouir en eux tous les vilains penchants, source de malheur pour les parents eux-mêmes². S'ils sont rebelles, n'hésitez pas à prendre les verges, il n'y a pas d'autre moyen de combattre les mauvais instincts³, car l'âme, comme le corps, a besoin de soins continuels⁴. Non contents de les corriger, apprenez-leur la vertu, élevez-les dans la crainte de Dieu et le souci de l'honneur⁵. Il n'est pas jusqu'à la politesse des manières à laquelle Hans Sachs ne donne de l'importance⁶.

¹ *Fastn.* 6: 360.

² « Aus solcher lieb zu den kinden
Die elteren oft gar erplinden,
Den kinden alln mutwillen lassen,
In als verhängen solcher massen
Das sie den iren jamer sehen. »

Fastn. 71: 177/181.

³ *Fastn.* 5: 481.

⁴ *Fastn.* 52: 273/274.

⁵ *Fastn.* 52: 399/402.

⁶ « Wenn Gott, der Herre, kumbt herein,
So ziecht ab ewre schleplein fein,
Und thut euch alle gen ihm neigen!
Thut ihm all reverenz erzeigen. »

Fastn. 52: 115/118.

Si vous avez un fils, détournez-le des mauvaises fréquentations; sinon vos conseils et vos punitions ne serviront de rien: il se laissera entraîner sans remède¹. Est-ce une jeune fille? Ne la quittez pas des yeux et gardez-la sage-ment à la maison, si vous ne voulez pas qu'on entache son honneur de soupçons injustifiés². Jeunes filles sans expérience, méfiez-vous des jeunes gens: leurs sentiments ne correspondent pas toujours à leurs discours tout de miel³. Pour juger de leur sincérité, renseignez-vous sur leur conduite et leur passé⁴. Soyez prudentes, car le mariage est chose sérieuse:

Heyraten ist ein langer kauff.

Notre poète a raison de prévenir ainsi les jeunes gens au seuil de la vie, car la jeunesse est naturellement trop confiante, et il faut lui rappeler souvent les dangers qui la menacent.

Il leur dit aussi qu'il faut montrer beaucoup de circonspection dans le choix des amis. Sous ce nom se cachent souvent des flatteurs, des hypocrites qui ne songent qu'à tirer profit de ceux dont ils recherchent la société, sans avoir pour eux aucune affection. Ils les entraînent au mal en flattant leurs défauts et leurs passions dans le seul but de s'assurer leurs faveurs. Méfiez-vous donc de ces faux amis. L'ami véritable n'est pas celui qui donne toujours raison, mais celui qui sait blâmer au besoin⁵. Eprouvez leur fidélité et leur sincérité:

Wie man im fewr probiert das goldt,
Also in not probiren solt
den waren freunt, spricht Salomon.

Fastn. 31: 119/121.

C'est seulement dans l'adversité que vous connaîtrez vraiment la valeur de votre ami⁶. Mais quand vous serez

¹ *Fastn.* 6: 363/365.

² *Fastn.* 39: 533/537.

³ *Fastn.* 1: 307/309.

⁴ *Fastn.* 35: 86/87.

⁵ *Fastn.* 14: 173/177.

⁶ *Fastn.* 14: 144/145.

certain de sa sincérité, ménagez-le, c'est un trésor inestimable que vous possédez¹.

Si Hans Sachs ne cesse de donner aux jeunes gens et aux enfants des conseils de morale pratique, il ne dédaigne pas non plus de s'occuper des moindres détails des rapports journaliers des hommes entre eux. Il nous rappelle souvent à la douceur. Sachons nous supporter les uns les autres: si notre prochain a des torts envers nous, soyons indulgents. N'en avons-nous pas envers lui? Puisqu'il est trop tard pour réparer le mal fait, nous dit-il dans la pièce intitulée *Der gestolen fastnacht hon*², oublions-le, nous nous épargnerons de plus grands ennuis.

N'est-ce pas là un conseil lâche, dira-t-on, et faut-il ainsi se laisser voler et tromper sans mot dire? Non certes, mais à quoi bon les procès et les conflits sans fin, qui coûtent souvent plus d'argent que nous n'en pouvons tirer? C'est donc sagesse que de les éviter et de faire son possible pour vivre en paix avec tout le monde.

Il ne faut d'ailleurs pas non plus se fier à la première personne venue et se laisser duper par elle. Soyez bons, mais non point bêtes. « Une trop grande confiance est sottise », avoue le chevalier trompé³. Ne donnons pas asile à des gens louches que nous ne connaissons pas. Ne confions nos intérêts qu'à ceux dont nous avons éprouvé maintes fois l'honnêteté.

De telles préoccupations, chez notre auteur pourront paraître superflues. Cependant, bien qu'ils portent sur des questions secondaires, ses conseils ne sont certes pas inutiles. Combien de gens apprennent tous les jours à leurs dépens ce qu'il en coûte d'être trop confiant!

¹ « ... Wol, dem auff erd
Ein trewer freundt zu theile werd;
Er sey vil köstlicher, wann gold.
Den hab in ehren, werd und hold. »

Fastn. 31: 389.

² *Fastn.* 21.

³ *Fastn.* 81: 376/377.

Ainsi Hans Sachs s'attache autant aux questions importantes qu'aux détails de la vie courante. La morale de notre poète est faite en effet de sagesse pratique. Il sait qu'il parle à des gens qui sont en plein dans la vie, qui y ont leurs intérêts, s'y meuvent, y agissent, et pour qui les beaux sermons éthérés n'auraient aucun sens. Il faut se mettre à leur portée. C'est ce qui explique l'emploi, chez Hans Sachs, de nombreux proverbes, marque de la sagesse populaire. Comme dans les incomparables fables de La Fontaine, nous trouvons chez notre poète toute une foule de conseils, que chacun de nous aura l'occasion d'appliquer tous les jours, et qui prennent par là toute leur valeur. C'est demain, c'est tout à l'heure même, à la sortie du spectacle, qu'il nous faudra être avisé et prudent pour repousser les avances hypocrites d'un flatteur, ou assez fort pour résister à l'insistance d'un compagnon qui veut nous entraîner au cabaret. Ces préceptes usuels nous épargneront bien des mécomptes.

Bien que, après avoir démolì, elle s'efforce de reconstruire, et d'éveiller des vertus à la place des vices qu'elle a déracinés, c'est une morale simple. Tous les conseils de Hans Sachs sont faciles à suivre. Il ne réclame pas des hommes des efforts surhumains pour atteindre à une perfection tout idéale. Connaissant l'éducation morale de son siècle et du peuple auquel il s'adresse, il ne touche cette corde qu'avec réserve. Le poète ne réclame d'eux que l'indispensable; il se borne à recommander les devoirs les plus stricts, à rappeler les règles de convenance les plus élémentaires, pour être plus sûr de se faire entendre. Agir différemment eût été une erreur profonde.

Rejetant toute sévérité exagérée, sa morale est humaine, presque douce quand elle punit, pour être plus certaine de toucher les auditeurs, et pour leur montrer qu'il ne s'agit pas d'une plaisanterie, mais qu'ils doivent prendre au sérieux cette leçon méritée.

Cette bonhomie répond d'ailleurs au caractère de notre poète bon chrétien et naturellement porté à l'indulgence. Il

est persuadé que pour changer les hommes, il faut plutôt les instruire et les amuser que les gourmander. Au théâtre d'ailleurs, et surtout dans de telles pièces, la dureté ou une trop grande sévérité rebuterait bientôt et manquerait tout à fait le but visé par notre moraliste.

C'est la morale du bon sens. Elle s'adresse à la raison, plutôt qu'au cœur et aux sentiments élevés. Elle raille plutôt qu'elle ne flagelle, plus certaine ainsi de trouver un écho dans toutes les consciences et de toucher l'amour-propre humain. La punition pourtant, méritée, latente, reste toujours assez près de l'esprit pour donner du poids et du sérieux aux conseils de Hans Sachs.

Le poète fait aussi appel à la volonté de l'homme, au respect de soi-même; quand bien même le mal ne serait pas puni en enfer, ne souillez pas votre réputation, ne perdez pas votre honneur par une mauvaise action. Car dès ce monde notre conduite trouve des censeurs. C'est à vous de mériter l'estime de vos concitoyens.

Parce qu'elle est simple, pratique et ne s'élève jamais dans des sphères inaccessibles à la plupart, on a reproché à cette morale sa « *Hausbackenheit* », d'être une morale « *pot-au-feu* ». Nous ne croyons pas qu'on puisse dire cela de la morale de Hans Sachs si bien adaptée aux mœurs et aux besoins du temps.

C'est la morale d'un chrétien qui regarde l'humanité pécheresse avec des yeux de père aimant et bon, et qui, plein d'indulgence, veut l'améliorer sans la rebuter; qui, lorsqu'il se fait sévère, gronde sans haine, sans rancune. Ce n'est pas la morale sèche, pessimiste, hostile d'un misanthrope, mais une morale animée, vivifiée par le souffle d'une âme vibrante, humaine elle-même; la morale d'un cœur pur et sain, qui croit à l'amélioration possible des autres, parce qu'il leur suppose la même force d'énergie, le même bon sens, le même besoin de pureté qu'il sent en lui-même. D'ailleurs, elle sait parfois s'élever assez haut, et ce n'est certes pas une

morale « *pot-au-feu* », que celle d'un homme qui a dit dans une de ses pièces :

Richt aber dein gantz leben auff
Tugendt! die selb adelt dich!

Fastn. 8: 301/302.

et encore ailleurs cette belle strophe :

Derweil die selig tugend ist
Ir selb belonung alle frist
So helt man sie billich in ehr
Ob schon kein Gott noch himmel wert¹.

Hans Sachs s'était proposé un noble but en composant ces farces de Carnaval: il voulait essayer d'améliorer ceux qui peut-être n'entendent pas les sermons. Son œuvre devait être un jardin de plaisance, ouvert à tous, où on ne trouve pas seulement des arbres couverts de fruits pour la nourriture des gens bien portants, mais aussi des herbes et des racines pour purger les esprits malades et chasser les vices et la folie². Nous pouvons nous demander ici s'il a atteint son but.

Nous avons tout lieu de l'espérer, car la plus grande partie de ceux qui couraient aux spectacles, ne fréquentaient pas assidûment les sermons. Au contraire, les farces et les leçons de morale qui y étaient données sous une forme nouvelle, telle une médecine agréable à prendre, avaient tous les succès. Plus attrayantes et plus vivantes, elles rencontraient des oreilles plus attentives et des cœurs moins rebelles. L'action qui se déroulait devant le spectateur laissait sur lui une impression profonde et le frappait davantage. Et cette satire mordante des vices devait avoir plus de force encore dans une ville comme Nuremberg, où chacun se reconnaissait ou reconnaissait le voisin dans ce type d'avare ridiculement bafoué ou dans ce vieux galant que tout le quartier montrait du doigt.

¹ Comedia Pallas und Venus.

² « Ein offenes Lustgärtlein an offener Strasse.... darin man nit allein findet etliche fruchttragende Bäumlein zur Speis der Gesunden, sondern Wurz und Kraut zur Arznei, die kranken Gemüter zu purgieren, und die böse Feuchtigkeit der Laster auszutreiben. » (Vorrede des II. Gedichtbuchs. 9 févr. 1566.)

En tout cas, les intentions de notre poète et ses efforts pour essayer de les réaliser, sont assez nobles pour que nous lui sachions gré d'avoir voulu contribuer avec un beau désintéressement au progrès de l'humanité.

Remarquons aussi que la philosophie de Hans Sachs, telle que nous la lisons dans ses *Fastnachtspiele*, présente un certain éclectisme: mélange de foi évangélique et de sagesse pratique, même païenne, elle répond à un triple courant qui se fait jour au xvi^e siècle. La morale chrétienne, imbue d'esprit luthérien, ne se souvient pas du Dieu du Moyen âge, sombre Moloch que rien ne pouvait contenter; mais elle aborde Dieu avec une confiance filiale toute nouvelle. Après d'elle et parallèlement au christianisme, se développe depuis deux siècles (entrant parfois en lutte contre l'Eglise), une morale bourgeoise de plus en plus puissante, qui trouve son expression dans la poésie gnomique et toute la littérature bourgeoise. Enfin un troisième courant vient s'y mêler sous l'influence de la Renaissance, c'est l'amour de la sagesse antique, de cette « *virtus* » qu'enseigne la philosophie des Grecs et des Romains, et qui, pleine de mâle constance, de stoïcisme et d'abnégation, attire tant notre poète.

Chacune de ces tendances, nous les avons rencontrées chez lui; car elles trouvent en lui un écho, comme tout ce qui intéressait son siècle. Nous voyons là une fois de plus que Hans Sachs, jusque dans ses œuvres didactiques, est bien l'expression de la complexité et de la grandeur de son époque.

CHAPITRE VII

Le métier dramatique dans Hans Sachs

Structure de la pièce: prologue. — Le *Herold*. — Introduction sans prologue. — Epilogue. — Structure très simple: unité de temps et de lieu. — Technique. — Un dialogue mêlé aux farces. — Les plus mauvaises, les meilleures des farces de Hans Sachs. — Progrès qu'il accomplit. — Qualités dramatiques de ses meilleures pièces: introduction, préparation, ascension, contraste, motivation, effet d'attente. — Dénouement. — Détails. — Progrès qu'il fait accomplir au drame: ses prédécesseurs. — Instructions scéniques. — Dialogue.

Analysons d'un peu plus près ces amusantes farces populaires. Nous remarquons tout d'abord que dans toutes les pièces les lignes extérieures de construction sont assez semblables et toujours très simples. En moyenne leur étendue ne dépasse guère quatre cents vers; beaucoup même, et ce ne sont pas les plus mauvaises, n'atteignent pas ce chiffre. La tradition pouvait déjà avoir appris à notre poète que ces drames sans ambition et d'un contenu aussi simple devaient être alertes et rapidement joués. C'est pourquoi il met ici un frein à son humeur causeuse, qui ailleurs l'entraîne parfois un peu trop.

De même le nombre de personnages est assez réduit: en moyenne trois à six lui suffisent. Pourtant il dépasse parfois ces limites, comme dans sa dernière pièce qui atteint 640 vers, ou dans *Die verschwätzte Bultschaft*¹ qui en a 547 ou *Der Neidhart*² qui en contient 508. Ce sont là des exceptions, comme aussi celle où Hans Sachs emploie dix-sept personnages³.

Quelques *Fastnachtspiele* débutent par un prologue. Ce sont ceux de la première période, c'est-à-dire la période où notre poète n'est pas encore en possession de son talent, mais où il fait son apprentissage de dramaturge. Ce fait s'explique par l'origine même du *Fastnachtspiel*. A l'occasion des réjouissances de Carnaval, les troupes de jeunes gens en-

¹ *Fastn.* 39.

² *Fastn.* 75.

³ *Fastn.* 39.

traient dans les maisons des particuliers, soit après y avoir été invités, soit de leur propre mouvement, pour y jouer leurs petites comédies. De là viennent les formules de salutation prononcées par un des acteurs au moment où la troupe entrait et prenait ses dispositions pour commencer la représentation. La pièce *Von der Eygenschafft der Lieb*¹ s'ouvre par ces vers :

Der Alt gehet ein unnd spricht:

Ich alter kumb zu euch herein
Gott gruss alle, die hinnen sein....

La farce *Der Teuffel nam ein alt weib*² débute ainsi :
Mosse, der Jued dritt ein und spricht:

Seit all gegruesst in gemein,
So allhie in versamelt sein;
Ein spiel zu hören und zu sehen....

D'autres fois, c'est dans une auberge qu'aura lieu la représentation, et alors le public y sera plus mêlé; ici encore il faudra saluer l'honorable compagnie, comme l'indique le prologue de la pièce *Fraw Wahrheit will niemandt herbergen*³: *Der Bauer spricht:*

Ir erbern frawn und züchting herrn
Ich kumb zu euch in die taffern
Zu habn mit euch ein guten Mut,
Wie man jetzund zu fassnacht thut.

Comme on le voit ici, c'est le plus souvent un des personnages qui adresse les salutations à l'assemblée. Parfois c'est le héraut, moins fréquemment pourtant dans les farces que dans les comédies ou les tragédies.

Ce héraut est une figure connue des anciens mystères et encore des *Fastnachtspiele* du xv^e siècle. Sous le nom de *Praecursor*, *Vorläufer*, *Einschreier*, *Ausschreier*, ou d'*Ernhold*, il précédait le cortège des acteurs qu'il était chargé de présenter au public après les salutations d'usage; c'était lui qui annonçait le sujet de la pièce, et, la représentation achevée, prononçait le *Beschluss* ou la conclusion, sans oublier d'ajouter le nom de l'auteur.

¹ *Fastn.* 1.

² *Fastn.* 76.

³ *Fastn.* 24.

Nous le voyons apparaître dans la « Cour de Vénus »¹:
der Ernholdt tritt ein, neiget sich und spricht:

Gott grüss euch, all ir biederleudt,
 Als ihr den hie gesamlet seidt!
 Her kumbt mit mir ein kleines heer,
 Die wollen euch allen zu ehr
 Ein kurtzes fassnacht spiel hie machen,
 Wer denn lust hat, mag sein wol lachen.

De même encore dans la farce d'Alexandre et Diogène².

Il faut aussi remarquer que plusieurs *Fastnachtspiele* appartenant à la dernière période (de 1554 à 1560) commencent par un prologue (*Fastn.* 68, 75) et souvent se terminent par un épilogue (*Fastn.* 70, 73, 76, 84, 85). Si on remarque en même temps que quelques-unes de ces farces sont divisées en actes (*Fastn.* 75, 84, 85), on peut se demander si ce n'est pas l'exemple de la comédie antique qui a amené le poète à faire ainsi annoncer par avance aux spectateurs le contenu de sa pièce et à résumer ensuite ses intentions didactiques. Cela semble probable.

Bien plus nombreuses pourtant sont les pièces où Hans Sachs jette le spectateur *in medias res*. Toute formule de salutation disparaît; le personnage entre tout de suite en scène et nous met en quelques mots au courant de la situation; l'action commence sans long préambule:

Eulenspiegel bin ich genandt,
 Im gantzen Teutschland wolbekandt.

Fastn. 51.

Ou mieux encore, le personnage se parle à lui-même: « *redet wider sich selb* » comme dans la farce *Das Kälberbrüten*³:
die Pewrin tritt ein, redt wider sich selb und spricht:

Ach, was sol ich arme nur than⁴!

Ces monologues d'introduction, toujours assez courts sont souvent excellents et fort à propos; ils sont bien supérieurs aux prologues.

De même dans l'épilogue, notre poète n'aime pas à faire de phrases inutiles. Il est rare que nous le voyions, comme

¹ *Fastn.* 2.

² *Fastn.* 44.

³ *Fastn.* 34.

⁴ Cf. de même *Fastn.* 49, 37, etc.

dans la farce *Der schwanger Pauer*¹, disséquer sa pièce pour énumérer tout au long les enseignements qu'il a voulu y donner. Cette manière est plus particulière aux comédies et aux tragédies. Généralement dans les *Fastnachtspiele* le *Beschluss* est assez succinct et exprimé de façon agréable et humoristique² par le personnage qui prononçait le prologue.

La structure générale de ces drames est toujours très simple. Nous avons vu que la plupart n'ont aucune division extérieure apparente et que, seules, quelques pièces, qui sont plutôt des comédies que des *Fastnachtspiele*, sont partagées en actes. Il va de soi que nous ne chercherons pas ici non plus une division en scènes, que Hans Sachs d'ailleurs ne connaît pas encore.

Notre poète n'aime pas les complications. Aussi en prend-il à son aise. Chaque fois qu'il rencontre une difficulté, il ne s'embarrasse pas pour si peu; il l'ignore tout simplement. C'est ainsi qu'il traite par exemple l'unité de lieu et de temps. Dans son théâtre, la notion de temps n'existe pas. Hans Sachs croit accomplir assez ses devoirs de dramaturge en faisant entrer son sujet dans une suite de scènes dialoguées. La vraisemblance exige-t-elle une interruption entre deux scènes? Il ne se laisse pas décourager et passe, nous faisant faire un bond dans le temps. C'est la fantaisie et l'imagination du spectateur qui suppléeront à ce manque total d'indication.

Lisons le *Fastnachtspiel: Der unersetzliche Geitzhunger*³. Simplicius part en voyage pour deux mois. Reichenburger et sa femme s'entretiennent quelques instants sur la scène; le voilà déjà de retour, les deux mois sont écoulés⁴.

Cette absence d'unité de temps trouble peu le spectateur dans les pièces où l'action est courte. Elle est plus choquante quand l'action embrasse des années⁵. Le marchand

¹ *Fastn.* 16.

² *Fastn.* 66 et 72.

³ *Fastn.* 32.

⁴ Cf. de même dans les pièces n° 51, 58, 39, 81.

⁵ *Fastn.* 19.

vient de signer un pacte avec le diable. Tout à coup, au vers suivant, sans crier gare, le poète nous fait sauter dix années: le diable va revenir pour faire valoir ses droits puisque la période convenue est écoulée. Aujourd'hui on est amusé de cet art simpliste qui fait parfois sourire.

Ce théâtre primitif n'est pas plus embarrassé s'il faut transporter la scène d'un lieu dans un autre. Nous y voyons les personnages entrer, sortir, s'agiter devant nos yeux, changer de lieu avec une désinvolture qui surprend un peu. Dans le *Fastnachtspiel* intitulé *Der blinde Messner mit dem Pfarrer und seinem Weib*¹ la scène se passe alternativement dans l'église, puis dans la maison, de nouveau dans l'église, et ainsi de suite sans indication scénique. Les personnages sortent, puis rentrent immédiatement après; voilà tout. Ailleurs même² l'action est transportée plusieurs fois du ciel sur la terre, puis de la terre au ciel. Ces changements de lieu fréquents laissent l'impression d'une suite d'images, comme des vues cinématographiques, qui se dérouleraient devant nous, conservant toujours le même décor. C'est un peu l'effet que produit *Von der ungluckhafften, verschwatzten Bulschafft*³. Pour combler toutes ces lacunes, on comptait sur l'imagination bienveillante des spectateurs.

Il ne pouvait guère en être autrement à l'époque de Hans Sachs. Le théâtre du xvi^e siècle était loin de connaître toutes les ressources scéniques de l'art moderne: rideau et décors faisaient complètement défaut à notre poète. La scène même était des plus rudimentaires, souvent formée seulement par quelques planches posées sur des tonneaux. Il fallait parfois l'improviser à la hâte dans une auberge ou une maison privée, ou se contenter de jouer sans façon, de plain-pied avec l'auditoire. Dans ces conditions il était difficile de donner l'apparence de la réalité. Aussi notre poète se contente-t-il des maigres ressources qu'il a à sa disposition.

¹ *Fastn.* 69.

² *Fastn.* 67.

³ *Fastn.* 39.

Ajoutons d'ailleurs que Hans Sachs savait parfois bien venir en aide à l'imagination de son auditoire. Lorsqu'il s'agit¹ de faire paraître un cavalier sur la scène, il demande au spectateur un petit effort, auquel il est habitué d'ailleurs. Le cheval ne peut avancer « *in das moss* ». Il restera en dehors de la scène, attaché à un arbre. Il suffit de cette explication et d'indiquer dans le texte: *Der Pawr kumbt gespordt* pour que chacun se représente « *Pferd, Baum, Moss, Dorenhecken, Graben* », etc.

De même quand, dans la farce *Der Bauer mit dem Kuedieb*², chacun s'étant retiré pour jouir du repos, en attendant l'aube, nous voyons le « *Kuedieb* » abuser de la bonté de ses hôtes et se glisser sur la scène avec précaution, nous sentons involontairement l'atmosphère calme et sereine de la nuit se répandre sur la scène. Mais si le poète ne sait pas toujours obtenir de si bons effets, il ne faut pas lui en tenir rigueur; il n'est jamais inférieur à son époque. Or, on ne peut équitablement lui demander de réaliser tout d'un coup la vraisemblance, qui aura bien du mal à conquérir la scène plusieurs siècles plus tard. Sachons-lui gré d'avoir, en quelques bonnes inspirations çà et là, instinctivement senti que, faute de mieux, il faut avertir l'auditoire, en quelques mots clairs, des changements que les décors ne peuvent indiquer. La naïveté de l'exécution n'entache en rien la limpidité du sujet.

En somme, si la structure de ses pièces est quelquefois d'une simplicité rudimentaire, elle répond aux ressources du théâtre à cette époque. Elle est proportionnée au cadre auquel est destiné le *Fastnachtspiel*, et au sujet simple qui y est traité.

Bien que quelques pièces soient même à ce point de vue irréprochables, ce n'est donc pas dans les qualités tout extérieures de l'agencement que nous aurons à chercher le secret de ses succès. Il faut voir ce que valent ses pièces en elles-mêmes.

¹ *Fastn.* 22.

² *Fastn.* 25.

Auparavant arrêtons-nous un peu à une de ses premières farces, *Fraw Armut und Pluto*¹.

Eins mals mich in dem hornung kalt
Mein weg trug durch ein dicken walt,
Mit schne bedeckt ublich....

Voilà comment commence cette pièce. Qui parle? On ne sait; il n'y a pas de rubrique. La description de la forêt continue encore pendant vingt-cinq vers, qui d'ailleurs ne manquent pas de poésie, mais qui ne font en rien songer à un drame. « Enfin j'aperçus au loin de la fumée; je me dirigeai vers elle, et arrivai chez un ermite, etc.... » Il n'y a pas de doute, c'est le poète lui-même qui parle. Continuons à l'écouter. « Je priai l'ermite de me donner asile pour la nuit; il accepta et me fit entrer. Mais je fus étonné de voir qu'il n'avait ni pain ni vin: cet homme se nourrissait d'herbes. Bientôt on frappa à la porte.... » C'est *Fraw Armut* qui arrive. Nous voici au fait, pensez-vous. Tout ceci n'était qu'un préambule du poète, et le débat entre *Armut* et *Pluto* va commencer! Pas du tout; la pièce continue sur ce ton pendant 440 vers, et le poète se révèle à la fin. C'est un récit qu'il nous fait ici, récit où les personnages, il est vrai, prennent la parole, mais introduits toujours par le narrateur lui-même, qui nous raconte un débat auquel il a, paraît-il, assisté. « *Mit seufftzender Kelen sie sprach* »: « *Ich bin Fraw Armut, mein Waltpruder!* » (44/45). — « *Fraw Armut sprach, Reichtumb sprach, der Waltpruder sprach*, etc. . . », voilà comment sont introduits tous les discours sans aucune exception.

Hans Sachs se laisse-t-il tromper par ce dialogue d'ailleurs vivant et alerte, entre les deux adversaires *Reichtum* et *Armut* d'une part, et l'ermite d'autre part? Croit-il que le dialogue suffise à faire un drame? Sans doute cette pièce n'a pas été écrite pour être jouée en Carnaval et n'a jamais dû pouvoir être représentée. Pourquoi l'a-t-il classée parmi les farces? Il semble que cela révèle chez le poète une ignorance complète des règles les plus élémentaires de l'art dra-

¹ *Fastn.* 3.

matique. Quoi de plus grave, en effet, pour un poète dramatique que la confusion de l'épopée et du drame.

Dans tous les *Gespräche* ou Dialogues, le poète dispose aussi le texte par rôles alternants, comme s'il s'agissait d'une pièce de théâtre. Il fait aussi précéder le dialogue d'une sorte de préambule, où sous forme de narration il nous met au courant de la situation et du lieu de l'action. Mais du moins ce sont des *Gespräche*, classés comme tels, destinés à être lus, mais non représentés.

La pièce entre Armut et Pluto est la seule parmi les *Fastnachtspiele* qui offre cette forme de récit dialogué. On trouve bien quelques *Kampfgespräche*, très semblables à cette pièce, quant au fond; mais le récit disparaît, et le dialogue, plus ou moins vif, plus ou moins dramatique, est du moins un vrai dialogue; si ce sont de mauvaises pièces, en tout cas, ce sont des drames représentables.

Faut-il dire que le *Fastnachtspiel* de Pluton datant de 1531, c'est-à-dire du début de la carrière théâtrale de Hans Sachs, ne connaît pas encore les exigences du genre dramatique? Non, car en 1518 déjà, nous le voyons transformer en farce¹ un *Kampfgespräch* écrit en 1515². Et déjà (il en est alors à ses tout premiers essais), il sait transcrire son récit, même avec une grande habileté, supprimant le long préambule, ajoutant un personnage (la jeune fille), polissant les discours pour les rendre plus naturels et plus vifs. Mille petits détails prouvent au contraire, combien il a conscience, instinctivement, de ce que doit être une pièce dramatique.

Alors, ce troisième *Fastnachtspiel*, unique dans toute la série, nous remplit de doute, et il est permis de se demander si on ne se trouve pas plutôt devant une erreur récente. Ce *Fastnachtspiel* publié par Gœtze est-il bien celui que le poète a voulu indiquer dans sa liste? La pièce dont parle le poète se trouvait dans le deuxième volume (2. *puech*). Or les trois premiers volumes manuscrits sont perdus, et

¹ *Von der Eygenschaftt der Lieb, Fastn.* 1.

² Keller, III, p. 406.

pour publier cette pièce Edmund Goetze a eu recours à un « *Einzeldruck* ». Est-ce bien la même pièce qu'indiquait Hans Sachs?

Remarquons que la pièce publiée par Goetze porte le titre de *Klag, Antwort und Urteyl zwischen Fraw Armut und Pluto*. Rien n'indique donc que ce soit un *Fastnachtspiel*. Elle est la seule de toute la collection qui ne soit pas intitulée *Fastnachtspiel* ou *Spiel* ou *Comedia*¹; la seule où le nombre de personnages ne soit pas indiqué. Or la même pièce est donnée, dans l'édition de Keller, comme *Kampfgespräch*². De plus, le *Fastnachtspiel* du Catalogue avait 364 vers, celui de Goetze en a 440³.

Tout nous porte donc à croire que le *Fastnachtspiel* que Hans Sachs a catalogué au n° 3 est perdu. La pièce publiée est probablement le récit dialogué, de même fond, sur lequel Hans Sachs a dû construire une farce comme il fit tant d'autres fois. Nous nous croyons donc en droit d'écarter catégoriquement cette pièce et de ne pas en tenir compte pour juger des connaissances dramatiques de notre poète.

Analysons maintenant quelques autres pièces, par exemple, la toute première que Hans Sachs composa: *Das Hoffgesindt Veneris*⁴.

Le *Ernholdt* se détachant du groupe de personnages qui est déjà sur la scène s'avance et, après quelques mots de salutations, présente à l'auditoire le fidèle Eckardt. Celui-ci s'avance à son tour, salue la compagnie, annonce l'arrivée prochaine de Vénus, et prévient tout le monde d'avoir à se garder d'elle, car elle lance des traits empoisonnés. En effet, Donheuser vient justement, se présente et raconte que Vénus l'a soumis et le retient à son service comme prisonnier. Enfin voici Vénus! Elle aussi décline ses nom et qualité,

¹ Toutes les pièces portent le titre de *Fastnachtspiel*, à l'exception de dix (N°s 8, 31, 44, 52, 67, 68, 70, 71, 73, 85) qui portent le nom de *Spiel*, et de deux (N°s 7, 84) qui ont celui de *comedia*.

² Keller 3: 212.

³ Soit une différence de 76 vers, la seule qui soit si importante dans toute la série.

⁴ *Fastn.* 2, 1517.

puis, menaçante, cherche autour d'elle une cible! Le chevalier lui dit qu'il ne craint rien; les flèches de l'amour ne sauraient l'atteindre. Le fidèle Eckardt l'engage à fuir. Il est trop tard, dit Vénus. Et en effet, touché, il s'abandonne à sa puissance. Un docteur, un bourgeois, un paysan, un lansquenet, un joueur, un buveur, une jeune fille même subissent le même sort. Tous gémissent, mais en vain. Il leur faudra subir le joug de Vénus toute leur vie. Aussi méfiez-vous de moi, dit Vénus aux spectateurs, gardez-vous de l'amour! Puis, après une danse, elle emmène sa nouvelle cour vers le *Venusberg* où elle leur promet toutes sortes de réjouissances.

Cette pièce est certes une des plus imparfaites de notre poète. Dans ce premier essai dramatique, il faut noter une certaine gaucherie dans la composition, qui révèle assez le *Meistersinger*. Remarquons par exemple que, à l'exception de l'introduction et du dénouement, le développement est formé de parties symétriques. Chacun des personnages s'avance et en quatre vers se présente et exprime son mépris de l'amour. Eckhardt lui conseille de fuir (deux vers). Vénus (deux autres vers) lui montre l'inutilité de la fuite: déjà ses traits ont frappé. Et chacun de plaindre son nouveau sort (quatre vers qui font équilibre aux premiers). Nous avons ainsi pour chacun des personnages une série toujours la même: 4 vers,
2 vers,
2 vers,
4 vers.

Aussi, malgré le soin que prend Hans Sachs de varier un peu les paroles: « *O fleuch baldt, fleuch — fleuch, fleuch, ach fleuch — o fleuch nur baldt* (Eckhard) — *Was hilfft dein fliehen dich — dich hilfft dein fliehen klein — der flucht magst nit geniessen*.... etc. (Vénus), le retour égal des répliques donne un certain rythme, accusé encore par les plaintes régulièrement répétées:

Ach weh! weh mir!
Ich bin Venus, der lieb ein hort,
Hör zu, Venus, der lieb ein gart —
Hör zu, Venus, der lieb ein ros —
Hör zu, Venus, der lieb ein kron....

et on a tout à fait l'impression de couplets, de refrains. C'est un drame dépourvu d'action, dont l'accent est lyrique, mais qui peut être représenté à la scène.

C'est là la première pièce d'un poète de vingt-deux ans. Voyons maintenant une pièce de la fin de sa carrière: *Der pauer mit dem saffran*¹ de novembre 1558, et voyons ce que notre poète a appris pendant ces quarante années de créations dramatiques.

Haincz Hederlein, un jeune valet de ferme entre en scène: second *miles gloriosus*, il a des airs de vouloir tout pourfendre et jure la mort de Stoffel qui l'a bousculé l'autre jour au bal. Mais son compagnon, Fritz Herman, a vite fait de le calmer. « Stoffel est aussi fort que toi, lui dit-il; méfie-toi, car le combat ne sera pas aussi inégal que tu le crois ». Notre fanfaron, radouci, reprend avec son compagnon le chemin du village. Voici une première scène de cent cinq vers.

La seconde scène se passe dans la maison de Fritz Herman: c'est dimanche, fête au pays; il y aura des invités chez lui. Sa femme l'envoie faire quelques emplettes à Lanczhuet, la ville voisine, où c'est justement la foire. Nous partons avec lui, l'accompagnons un petit bout de chemin, puis le laissons aller. . . C'est maintenant la place du marché à Lanczhuet. Le marchand prépare son éventaire. Haincz Hederlein, le valet fanfaron, approche et achète maint produit précieux: chacune de ses paroles révèle sa sottise. . . . Fritz Herman arrive à son tour, mais l'odeur peu habituelle des herbes mélangées lui trouble les sens, il s'évanouit. Les efforts et les merveilleux produits du marchand Yppocras sont vains. Seul Hederlein parvient à ramener le paysan, en lui faisant respirer un peu de crottin de cheval. Fritz Herman fait ses achats (il y montre autant d'esprit que son camarade), et tous deux retournent à leur village. Le marchand ferme sa boutique et s'éloigne: « *Eine guete Nacht wünscht euch Hans Sachs* ».

¹ *Fastn.* 79.

On est étonné à la lecture d'une telle pièce, car on y cherche vainement un fil conducteur. Il y a là une suite de scènes entre lesquelles on ne voit pas de rapport. Pourquoi l'épisode du soldat fanfaron avant les scènes de marché? Il faut avouer qu'il n'y a pas de continuité. Cette structure rudimentaire rappelle les anciens *Fastnachtspiele*. Néanmoins cette pièce a quelque valeur, parce que le poète y montre qu'il a le don d'observer et d'imiter. Il sait y reproduire des scènes de la vie paysanne qui donnent l'illusion de la réalité. C'est exactement l'équivalent allemand des mimes anciens; cette pièce pourrait fort bien être signée Héronidas.

Il ne faudrait pas croire pourtant, d'après les deux pièces que nous venons d'analyser que tous les *Fastnachtspiele* de Hans Sachs sont des bouffonneries rudes et grossières et ne ressemblent en rien à des drames qui se tiennent.

Voyons maintenant l'autre face, et arrêtons-nous un moment, si vous le voulez bien, à écouter la farce *Der fahrent Schüler mit dem Teuffelbannen*¹. Nous avons déjà eu l'occasion d'analyser cette pièce dans un chapitre précédent² et nous ne reviendrons ici que sur les détails d'exécution.

C'est par un monologue de la paysanne que s'ouvre la scène; son mari est sorti. Ah! si monsieur le curé la savait seule! Mais le village est rempli de mauvaises langues. Et si son mari les prenait ensemble, jaloux comme il l'est, elle passerait un mauvais quart d'heure. Il se doute déjà de quelque chose et l'a menacée plusieurs fois. Mais, tiens, voici justement le curé qui arrive! Il a vu partir le mari de bon matin et en profite pour venir voir un peu sa chère Madelon. Personne ne l'a vu, car il est entré par derrière en sautant la haie. Vite Madelon va chercher quelques boudins et du vin, et nos deux amis se disposent à faire ripaille. — Mais le prêtre est soucieux: il ne peut s'empêcher de songer au mari; il craint son retour à l'improviste, et tremble, car le paysan lui a interdit sa maison dernièrement, et le menace chaque fois qu'il le rencontre.

¹ *Fastn.* 37.

² Cf. ch. I.

Cette première scène d'introduction est déjà un petit chef-d'œuvre: peu à peu nous devinons tout. Dès les premiers mots nous prévoyons que le mari reviendra et troublera cette joyeuse fête! Le pressentiment, vague d'abord, se précise; un peu angoissés, comme nos deux compères obsédés par la même idée, nous craignons à tout moment le retour de l'indésirable. Justement on sonne à la porte. Non, c'est seulement un écolier nomade, et nous en sommes quittes pour la peur. Notre curé se remet peu à peu de son premier effroi et, rassuré, prend des airs de grand seigneur. Pour se venger de cette fausse alerte, il reçoit l'écolier avec insolence. Plus il s'emporte, plus notre malin jeune homme se fait doux et patelin. Quel contraste, et comme tous ces détails sont humains! Comme tout ceci est bien observé et bien amené! Maintenant, nous en sommes plus sûrs que jamais, le mari reviendra. Et en effet, au moment même où nos deux amants commencent, grâce au bon vin, à se remettre de leurs transes de tout à l'heure, le paysan frappe. Avec quelle adresse Hans Sachs a-t-il su ménager l'effet de son retour! Dans le développement de cette action, tout s'enchaîne merveilleusement.

Il y a là assurément une certaine intelligence du théâtre, dans ces gradations savantes une habileté dramatique qu'on ne saurait nier et qui est faite pour nous surprendre.

Voyez aussi les personnages! Chacun n'a-t-il pas une âme individuelle, bien humaine? Tous suivent leurs impulsions propres, et c'est du conflit de leurs passions que naît l'intrigue et l'intérêt de l'action. Ce n'est pas pour s'amuser ou gagner quelques écus que l'écolier va préparer sa petite comédie: c'est pour se venger. Car il a une âme, lui aussi. Il a de l'amour-propre qui le rend sensible aux injures blessantes du curé; et puisqu'il ne peut le faire autrement, il se vengera par ruse.

C'est une vraie comédie que nous venons d'analyser là, une comédie dans le sens relevé du mot, et parfaite en tous points. Certes elle révèle un habile metteur en scène et dénote

chez Hans Sachs, que nous ne croyions pas si expert, la connaissance de toutes les ressources et de toutes les finesses de son art.

Si c'est là, à notre avis, sa meilleure pièce, ce n'est cependant pas une exception. Beaucoup d'autres, comme *Das heisse Eysen*¹, *Eulenspiegel mit dem blauen Tuche*², etc.³ renferment aussi des traits fins et habiles.

Que de bonnes choses auprès des premières pièces étudiées! D'une part *Das Hoffgesindt Veneris*, *Der Bauer mit dem Saffran*, d'autre part *Das Teuffelbannen*, voilà les limites extrêmes entre lesquelles notre poète évolue pendant toute sa carrière. Ajoutons bien vite qu'il se rapproche beaucoup plus souvent de cette dernière pièce que des deux autres. En effet, s'il y a peu de pièces parfaites chez Hans Sachs, il y en a beaucoup de fort respectables et qui dénotent un art évident. Les défauts et les ignorances dramatiques dans les pièces allégoriques ou dans celles où son intention didactique est par trop accusée, sont plus fréquents dans les premiers *Fastnachtspiele*, de sorte qu'on peut admettre que, tout d'abord complètement ignorant des ressources de son art, il a su, par lui-même, peut-être un peu parce qu'il prenait part aux représentations de ses pièces, s'élever graduellement et prendre conscience de sa tâche de dramaturge.

E. Goetze a publié dans son édition des *Fastnachtspiele*⁴, la pièce intitulée *Das Gespräch Alexandri Magni mit dem Philosopho Diogeni*, dont il nous est parvenu deux versions. La comparaison des deux pièces nous permet de voir Hans Sachs à l'œuvre et de juger de ses connaissances techniques. En remaniant son *Kampfgespräch*, en effet, il ne s'est pas contenté de transformer le récit dialogué en un dialogue réel. Il a ajouté un personnage, le *Héroid*, qui, accompagnant Alexandre, s'entretiendra avec lui. Ils échangent leurs réflexions, ce qui évite à notre poète de longs monologues peu intéressants et peu naturels, tout en lui per-

¹ *Fastn.* 38.

² *Fastn.* 77.

³ Cf. *Fastn.* 83.

⁴ Vol. 4, *Fastn.* N° 44.

mettant de mettre le spectateur au courant de ce qui se passe dans l'esprit des personnages. L'exposition, encore gauche, est entièrement ajoutée; le *Beschluss* même est tout autre: il prend dans la bouche de Diogène une violence particulière, qui contraste fort avec la douceur bienveillante du premier *Kampfgespräch*, et donne à la pièce une tendance nouvelle. Ça et là, on trouve dans la seconde version des changements qui dénotent une plus grande habitude des nécessités dramatiques. Ainsi Alexandre, pensant que Diogène veut réfléchir un peu, s'éloigne et l'observe de loin en s'entretenant avec l'*Ernhold* pendant quelques instants. C'est alors seulement qu'il s'approche de nouveau du sage. Dans le *Kampfgespräch*, il s'écarte avec sa suite et revient aussitôt, dans l'espace de deux vers. Il y a certes entre les deux pièces de grandes différences de technique. Le sujet est le même, le fond de la discussion entre Alexandre et Diogène est exactement le même, mot pour mot; l'ancien prologue du *Gespräch*, où l'auteur lui-même prenait la parole, le *Beschluss* sont transformés de main de maître; le départ d'Alexandre après la discussion, de nombreux détails ainsi que les mouvements de scène sont tous ajoutés avec beaucoup de clairvoyance pour en faire un drame. Et si ce n'est pas un drame sans défaut, il faut du moins reconnaître que Hans Sachs y a mis autant de mouvement que le sujet le permettait. La transformation du *Gespräch* en *Spiel* révèle donc chez lui un sens dramatique réel.

C'est pourquoi, malgré une pièce tardive comme *Der Bauer mit dem Saffran*, dont la construction est manquée, on peut dire que Hans Sachs possède une technique dramatique indéniable, un instinct qu'a développé sans doute son habitude de la scène.

Même, beaucoup de pièces de la maturité révèlent de réelles qualités. Nous avons vu avec quelle habileté Hans Sachs a traité l'introduction de « L'écolier évoquant le diable ». Partout où cela lui est possible, il préfère aux prologues, peu propres à l'action, les monologues qui préparent la situation et renseignent en même temps sur

le caractère du personnage. Toutes les introductions sont faites de main de maître et prouvent chez le poète une grande habileté et une intelligence de son art qu'il n'avait pas au début de sa carrière. Ainsi l'introduction de la pièce *Der alte Buhler mit der Zauberei*¹ ou de *Das heisse Eysen*² ou le monologue de la *Alt unhuld* dans la farce *Die wunderlichen Männer gut zu machen*³ révèlent une évidente habileté. En peu de mots, le spectateur est mis au courant des faits; quelques vers suffisent à indiquer le conflit et ses causes, et ceci avec vivacité et de la façon la plus naturelle du monde.

S'il s'entend à introduire ses pièces, le poète sait aussi comment préparer les différents points de l'action. Ça et là des personnages entrent ou restent seuls sur la scène. Hans Sachs en profite pour leur donner un rôle important. Se parlant à eux-mêmes, ils résument en quelque sorte la situation au spectateur, de sorte que les personnages qui arrivent aussitôt peuvent agir en toute liberté: le public est au courant. C'est ainsi que la *Kupplerin*⁴, désolée de manquer son coup, se demande dans un court monologue de huit vers, très naturel et plein d'intérêt pour la conduite de l'action, comment elle sortira de l'impasse où elle s'est engagée. « Le moine ne peut venir, dit-elle, vite il faut en chercher un autre ». Le spectateur voit ainsi la direction nouvelle que prend l'action. Ces finesses, qu'on rencontre assez souvent, donnent plus de vie dramatique à la pièce. De même l'ami, dans *Der jung Kauffmann Nicola mit seiner Sophia*⁵, prévient le jeune homme dès le début du danger qu'il court dans la compagnie de Sophia. Son insistance fait penser au spectateur que ses conseils seront vains; cet avertissement est donc utile à l'intérêt de la pièce.

Ce n'est pas seulement dans la farce du *Teuffelbannen* que tout était préparé avec art. Hans Sachs montre les

¹ *Fastn.* 62.

² *Fastn.* 38.

³ *Fastn.* 63.

⁴ *Fastn.* 57.

⁵ *Fastn.* 23.

mêmes soins dans beaucoup de *Fastnachtspiele*¹. Les transitions mêmes sont parfois ménagées avec finesse :

Was wonders wird er fahen an
der wunder seltzam Egelmayer

se demande la servante dans la farce *Der gross Eyferer*². Tous les avertissements ou les pressentissements sont autant de détails qui préparent bien la suite de l'action.

Dans la construction de plusieurs *Fastnachtspiele* notre poète essaie d'établir une certaine gradation, pour augmenter peu à peu l'intérêt. Le mouvement ascensionnel de quelques-uns est du meilleur effet. Ainsi *Die kuppelnde Schwiegermutter mit dem alten Kauffmann*³, *Der Doktor mit der grossen Nase*⁴, *Die listige Buhlerin*⁵ et la pièce si comique *Der Pawren Knecht will zwei Frawen haben*⁶, sont soigneusement traitées à ce point de vue. Cet effort apparaît encore dans beaucoup de pièces, auxquelles il contribue à donner un mouvement intérieur plus intéressant et plus nuancé, jusqu'au dénouement qui, très naturel, garde alors son plein effet.

Dans d'autres farces Hans Sachs met l'action en valeur par un mouvement double de montée et de descente. Notre poète aime beaucoup les contrastes. Toutes les oppositions de caractères, de sentiments, les pensées ou les paroles des personnages, en désaccord avec la réalité, toutes les différences des motifs les plus divers sont mises en relief dans ses pièces et y produisent de très bons effets. De même le poète accentue le contraste entre l'action ascendante et descendante. Voici le paysan qui s'achète du beau drap : il sera élégant, à la fête, avec ce vêtement tout neuf ; il s'en réjouit d'avance, mais trop tôt, d'autres en profiteront ; il devra danser dans ses habits rapiécés⁷. Là c'est le mari qui croyait prendre au piège sa femme ; mais c'est elle enfin, plus rusée qu'il

¹ Cf. surtout N^{os} 35, 43, etc.

² *Fastn.* 45.

³ *Fastn.* 74.

⁴ *Fastn.* 83.

⁵ *Fastn.* 43.

⁶ *Fastn.* 36.

⁷ *Fastn.* 77.

triomphe¹. Une autre, par contre, criait déjà victoire, mais la voilà victime de sa propre machination². Reichenberger alléché par un bel espoir, abandonne Simplicius, victime de petit profit ;bientôt il s'aperçoit qu'il a lâché la proie pour l'ombre³.

N'y a-t-il pas là des effets cherchés, un art voulu et conscient? On songe malgré soi à la gravure sur bois des contemporains qui, elle aussi, ne cherche pas autrement ses effets que par des reliefs saisissants qui exagèrent les lumières et les ombres.

Les caractères, par ce moyen, deviennent plus nets; mais ils offriront surtout de l'intérêt pour le spectateur, s'il les voit évoluer devant lui, sous l'influence de tel ou tel événement. Hans Sachs ne transporte pas sur la scène des sentiments immobiles, achevés, si l'on peut dire, qu'il fait exprimer par des personnages *ad hoc* à l'aide de discours plus ou moins vifs. Il s'efforce de montrer comment tel personnage est amené à penser, à sentir, à vouloir ainsi, et il essaye de représenter les fluctuations, le mouvement continu et progressif de l'âme. Le spectateur vit et sent avec les personnages; il embrasse leur complexité intime et s'intéresse à eux autrement qu'à des marionnettes sans réalité⁴.

Bien plus, dans beaucoup de pièces où les gens appartiennent à des classes différentes de la société, il est frappant de voir combien Hans Sachs, consciemment ou non, use d'un langage différent selon les milieux auxquels appartiennent ses personnages. Le vocabulaire des bourgeois et des nobles est beaucoup plus choisi et par contre moins vif, moins coloré, plus banal que celui des paysans ou des gens du peuple, qui font usage d'une profusion de proverbes et d'expressions populaires toujours pittoresques et souvent grossières⁵. De même, ce sont toujours des personnages inférieurs qui font les jeux de mots, indication nette de la finesse d'observation de notre poète.

¹ *Fastn.* 46.

² *Fastn.* 38.

³ *Fastn.* 32.

⁴ *Fastn.* 21: 11.

⁵ Cf. *Fastn.* 66, 73, 75 et beaucoup d'autres.

Hans Sachs, soucieux de donner partout l'apparence de la réalité, cherche à motiver toutes les actions qu'il fait accomplir devant nous. C'est à cause de l'hiver qu'Eulenspiegel se trouve embarrassé d'être sans logis; aussi sera-t-il très naturel qu'il cherche à gagner la confiance du duc de Brunswick¹. C'est pour punir l'hôtelière de sa curiosité et de sa méchante langue qu'il lui joue un mauvais tour dont elle se souviendra². Tous ces petits traits éparpillés çà et là rendent l'action vraisemblable et donnent une apparence de vérité.

Mais notre poète ne se borne pas à imprimer un mouvement ascendant aux faits et aux caractères: il faut mettre les uns en rapport avec les autres, créer des conflits, des surprises, etc., pour éveiller la curiosité, l'impatience même du spectateur; il faut que son esprit soit tendu vers les moindres gestes de ceux dont dépend l'issue qu'on espère ou redoute. Tel personnage nous confie ce qu'il voudrait faire; mais comment y arrivera-t-il?³ L'attente augmente l'intérêt. Eulenspiegel, impatient lui-même, pique encore la curiosité du public⁴. Même une fois⁵ l'attente se prolonge pendant soixante vers. Très habilement traitée, cette scène nullement ennuyeuse décuple l'intérêt. Quelquefois l'attente, doublée de crainte qui va augmentant toujours, donne à la pièce une atmosphère d'angoisse du plus heureux effet⁶.

Ce sont surtout les hésitations, les réticences, l'incertitude des personnages qui, ménagées avec soin, attirent et retiennent l'attention. Simon Wirdt n'en finit pas d'expliquer ce qui le tourmente⁷, ni Eulenspiegel de dévoiler son métier⁸. Aussi l'Inquisiteur, l'hôtelière brûlent-ils d'impatience ainsi que le spectateur! Hans Sachs obtient de la sorte des effets vraiment dramatiques, dans quelques farces⁹. Dans

¹ *Fastn.* 58.

² *Fastn.* 72: 72 et 157; id. *Fastn.* 25: 21/23.

³ *Fastn.* 45: 110; *Fastn.* 62: 107/110.

⁴ *Fastn.* 72: 328.

⁵ *Fastn.* 72: 78/141.

⁶ *Fastn.* 70.

⁷ *Fastn.* 53: 363 ff.

⁸ *Fastn.* 72: 77/142.

⁹ Cf. *Fastn.* 32; *Fastn.* 38: 140/214.

Das heisse Eysen surtout, le dénoûment toujours retardé acquiert une force toute particulière.

Par contre, après la catastrophe, le poète est toujours réservé. Sauf dans ses premières pièces et dans celles où l'intention didactique est manifeste, il n'aime pas à allonger inutilement et s'efforce, dès que le but est atteint, de terminer la pièce aussi rapidement que possible. C'est pourquoi Eulenspiegel ne fait pas devant nous le récit de ses méfaits: le spectateur les connaît déjà et l'action n'offre plus d'intérêt pour lui¹.

Hans Sachs apporte les mêmes soins aux détails les plus infimes. Non seulement il les choisit avec vérité, mais il garde d'un bout de la pièce à l'autre beaucoup de logique dans l'emploi qu'il en fait. Ainsi Eulenspiegel remarque:

Wie leichnam grim kalt ist es heudt

Fastn. 51: 22.

et le prêtre, comme pour rappeler cette circonstance s'écrie très naturellement:

Die kelt ist heut gar ungehewer,
ich muss ein wenig schürn das feuer.

Fastn. 51: 245/246.

Beaucoup de vraisemblance dans ces petits drames, et beaucoup de naturel. Souvent même les entrées et sorties des personnages, motivées avec soin dans les pièces de la maturité, se font avec une aisance qui séduit², auprès des mannequins de bois des premiers *Fastnachtspiele*. Le mouvement, la vie intense et vraie, qui anime les meilleures farces, fait qu'elles plaisent encore aujourd'hui. Le dialogue, rapide, alerte, naturel, les répliques vives donnent l'illusion de la réalité. Aussi pourrions-nous dire, sans craindre l'exagération, que si Hans Sachs n'est pas un dramaturge de génie, il révèle au milieu de ses faiblesses, des qualités solides et un instinct dramatique, un talent remarquables pour son époque.

Car pour juger notre poète équitablement, il faut voir ce que lui avaient légué les siècles précédents. Les plus anciens *Fastnachtspiele* que nous possédions ne remontent

¹ *Fastn.* 58: 319.

² *Fastn.* 83; *Fastn.* 70: 228.

pas au delà du xv^e siècle, et il semble peu probable d'après leur forme rudimentaire qu'il y en ait eu d'autres auparavant. On ne peut vraiment donner, en effet, le nom d'œuvre dramatique aux anciens *Fastnachtspiele*. On n'y trouve pas la moindre trace d'action. Toute la pièce n'est qu'une longue suite de discours juxtaposés, et le dialogue même est absent. L'unique action consiste en rixes ou batailles sans intérêt.

C'est donc surtout à ses devanciers qu'il faut comparer Hans Sachs pour mesurer à leur juste valeur les progrès qu'il a fait faire à la scène comique. Les deux plus connus, Rosenplüt et le barbier Hans Folz n'ont pu lui apprendre grand-chose. Chez eux nous assistons à des défilés de fous, d'amoureux, de paysans lourds et grossiers, sans aucune individualité, qui viennent débiter leurs discours, chacun à son tour, sans avoir aucun rapport l'un avec l'autre. Tel ce *Spiel* de Hans Folz, où une douzaine de paysans viennent successivement prendre la parole pour nous raconter leurs aventures galantes¹. Dans ces sortes de *Fastnachtspiele*, chaque personnage n'est autre chose qu'un porte-parole, venant représenter quelque folie ou quelque sottise; il ne se distingue des précédents que par un numéro d'ordre: ils sont désignés sous les noms de *premier paysan*, *deuxième paysan*, *troisième paysan*, etc., ou de *premier fou*, *second âne*, *troisième sot*, etc.²; fréquemment ils ont à prononcer chacun le même nombre de vers, ce qui montre assez le caractère primitif de ces pièces.

D'autres pièces sont déjà un peu supérieures en ce sens que le dialogue y existe. Ce sont de petites scènes groupées autour d'un personnage central: juge, reine des fous, hôtelier. Par lui les autres personnages sont mis en rapport indirect, parfois même l'un répond au discours du précédent. Comme on le voit, le dialogue n'y est pas encore très animé. Quant à l'action, si toutefois on peut l'appeler ainsi, elle se borne à des assauts de bons mots, de plaisanteries grossières, à des devinettes suivies de réponses saugrenues.

¹ Keller N° 43: « Gar ein vast spotisch paurnsplil gar kurzweilig zu lesen. Sagt ietlicher was im auf der puolschaft gegent ist. »

² « Des Künig von Engellant Hochzeit. »

On ne pourrait pas dire cependant qu'il n'existe pas, dès cette époque, des pièces présentant une certaine action. Les *Arztspiele* et les *Bauernspiele* sont déjà un peu plus animés; Rosenplüt donne le *Fastnachtspiel Die Türken*. Mais Hans Folz surtout fait avancer un peu le drame comique avec ses tableaux de genre, scènes empruntées à la vie journalière, qu'il cherche à agencer sous une forme dramatique. C'est une noce de paysans, des querelles de ménage, des disputes entre un marchand et son client, entre paysans plaideurs, entre vilains et bourgeois.

Le seul intérêt de ces pièces, toujours très courtes, réside dans les calembours, les plaisanteries crues, les gros mots, et souvent aussi les coups de poing. Si le dialogue y gagne en vivacité, la pièce rebute aujourd'hui par l'énormité de l'ordure. Les sujets les plus goûtés du public à cette époque, c'étaient certes les procès de tout genre et surtout les procès en séparation ou en réparation d'honneur, plus malpropres encore. Les personnages sont encore gauches et peu souples. Tous parlent, agissent, pensent et sentent de la même manière. Il n'y a pas de caractères proprement dits. Cependant les pièces deviennent plus vivantes, la sphère d'action s'élargit. Dans toute cette première période, on voit le *Fastnachtspiel* s'éloigner peu à peu de l'aspect de défilé qu'il avait gardé de son origine, et bien que rude encore et maladroit, prendre forme avec les imitations grossières de la réalité quotidienne. Personne n'a encore conscience de ce qu'est un drame.

Quant aux poètes suisses, Niclas Manuel et Gengenbach, qui depuis quelque temps produisaient aussi des *Fastnachtspiele* comme l'*Ablasskrämer* ou *der Totenfresser*, s'ils savent s'élever au-dessus de Rosenplüt et de Folz par une réserve morale remarquable, et par la chaleur de leurs convictions religieuses et politiques, du moins ils ne connaissent guère mieux que ceux-ci l'art de la scène. Ils n'ont pas non plus l'idée du drame.

En somme, ignorance de l'arrangement dramatique, absence d'action réelle et manque de sens moral, voilà ce qui s'offrait au jeune poète au début de sa carrière. Qu'aurait-il

pu y apprendre? Pourtant, dès ses premières pièces, nous voyons que, sous sa plume, la langue, le contenu de la pièce en même temps que l'austérité morale, font faire au *Fastnachtspiel* des progrès gigantesques. Seule l'intuition du génie lui a appris à faire de ces ébauches grossières qu'il avait sous les yeux, des comédies amusantes et vraies. Le premier, il a compris que la source à laquelle il devait puiser, c'était la vie dans ses aspects les plus divers, et seul, à son époque, il a su montrer un talent d'observateur très clairvoyant. Dans ses pièces il s'est efforcé d'étudier et de refléter l'humanité, à un moment où, surtout en Allemagne, le théâtre était encore dans la barbarie.

Le premier, il a vu clairement que les paroles ne suffisaient pas au théâtre, mais qu'il y fallait une action, des péripéties, des situations. Aussi le dialogue, qui existait à peine avant lui, devient-il dans ses farces un véritable échange d'idées; et les discours ne sont plus la fin de la pièce, mais les moyens de représenter des faits et de mettre en conflit des caractères différents ou opposés.

C'est aussi parce qu'il comprit si bien ces conditions essentielles, qu'il s'efforça d'aider, par des instructions scéniques, à la représentation de ses pièces. Il attachait une grande importance au jeu des acteurs: aussi nous dit-il que dans ses pièces « *sind die manigfaltig allerley person gut und böß eine jede nach irer art, auff das eygentlichst und fleissigst dar gethan mit iren gebärden, Worten und Wercken, eingängen und aussgängen angezeigt, das also diss buch nit allein nutzlich und gut zu lesen ist, sonnder auch, wer lust hat, solche comedi oder spil anrichten wolt, gar mit leichter müh aus disem buch bekommen möcht* »¹.

Relevons quelques-unes de ces notes scéniques, par exemple dans la farce *Der Teuffel nam ein alt weib*². Les entrées et sorties des personnages sont minutieusement indiquées: « *Mosse, der Jued, dritt ein und spricht* » — *Der*

¹ Keller X, 7. Préface du volume III.

² *Fastn.* 76.

Deuffel get ein, redt mit im selber und spricht » (19/20). — Ailleurs: « *der Arzt kumbt wider geloffen, spricht* » (385/386) — « *der Jued get ab* » (19) — mais « *der Teuffel fert ab* » (119/120). Le discours est toujours introduit par le mot « *spricht* ». — Si une mimique quelconque doit accompagner le discours, Hans Sachs ne manque pas de l'indiquer *Der Arzt... stet und spricht* (100), *Der deuffel seczt sich nider* 181/182, *Esaw der psessen, fert auf* (278/279), *Das alt weib schaut umb* (46/47), *Der arzet lacht* (347/348), *Pewt im die hant* (256/257). Il tient à donner à tous les gestes l'apparence de la réalité, aussi n'oublie-t-il pas de remarquer (337/338): *Der arzt zelt die daler, Der deuffel nembt das gelt* (339/340). Il observe même une certaine gradation dans l'expression des sentiments par les gestes. Le médecin, en donnant sa parole d'honneur, « *reckt zwen finger auf* » (340/341), Esau le possédé « *schuet den kopf, sieht schiechlich* » (277/278), puis dans une crise « *er knirscht mit den zenen, fäust die hent, sam wöll er auf in fallen* » (281/282); son frère enchaîné « *schlecht mit fewsten umb* » (353/354), le diable désespéré de son impuissance « *hebt paid hent auf* » (160/161), tandis que le triomphe de la sorcière, fière de diriger le diable lui-même, s'exprimera, avec quelle finesse, par un claquement de langue significatif: « *die alt thuet im ain schnelzlein nach* » (137/138)¹.

Comme on le voit, Hans Sachs règle par le menu le jeu de tous les acteurs. Aujourd'hui nous ne pouvons nous empêcher d'admirer ces instructions précises; elles sont de première importance dans les pièces du poète; et montrant combien il tenait à ce qu'elles imitassent la réalité, elles témoignent nettement des pas de géant que l'art dramatique a faits avec lui en peu de temps.

En résumé, à l'exception de quelques pièces médiocres, les *Fastnachtspiele* de notre poète sont donc des pièces courtes et vives, où rien n'est inutile; le moindre trait a son importance; chaque action est bien

¹ Cf. de même *Fastn.* 25: 104/105, 112/113; *Fastn.* 19: 24/25, etc.

préparée, bien motivée ; tous les détails de pensée, d'action comme de mouvement de scène contribuent admirablement à augmenter la vraisemblance de la pièce ; chaque personnage, nettement dessiné avec ses traits particuliers, est présenté aux spectateurs comme un homme de la vie réelle. La scène n'est plus le théâtre d'autrefois, mais commence à être le miroir de la vie.

Qu'on essaye de comparer maintenant aux défilés fades ou aux procès grossiers du xv^e siècle les pièces même moyennes de Hans Sachs, et on se rendra compte des progrès immenses qu'il a fait faire à la scène comique, et on comprendra que Gervinus ait pu dire de notre poète qu'il est « *ein Reformator in der Poesie, so gut wie Luther in der Religion, wie Hutten in der Politik* »¹.

Ce réformateur est grand pour son temps. Aujourd'hui, malgré ses essais sincères, le théâtre de Hans Sachs paraît encore primitif. C'est un simulacre d'événement et non encore une peinture de passions. M. Ch. Schweitzer dit avec raison : « *Supérieur à Molière débutant, il restera toute sa vie inférieur à Molière grandi ; jamais il ne s'élèvera à la hauteur de la comédie de caractères, jamais il n'atteindra à l'ampleur de conception qui apparaît dans le « Tartuffe », dans l'« Avare », dans le « Misanthrope* »².

Mais, à son époque, il était impossible à Hans Sachs de pénétrer à fond la nature de l'art dramatique. S'il ne connaissait pas de règles, il sentait instinctivement, confusément en lui-même ce que devait être le théâtre. On peut dire que dans ses modestes farces de Carnaval, la vraie comédie est en germe. C'est quelque chose déjà que d'avoir été le premier à la pressentir, à la préparer.

¹ GERVINUS : *Geschichte der deutschen Dichtung*.

² SCHWEITZER : *Etude sur la vie et les œuvres de Hans Sachs*, p. 303.

CHAPITRE VIII

Jugement d'ensemble sur le poète et l'œuvre

Qualités et imperfections: tendance morale. — Choix des sujets. — Imperfection dramatique. — Grossièreté. — Progrès qu'il fait faire. — Vivacité. — Caractéristique. — Langue. — Poésie. — Bonne humeur. — La personnalité du poète dans son œuvre.

Si Hans Sachs a su mériter la popularité dont il jouit aujourd'hui en Allemagne, il faut, pour être juste, reconnaître aussi ses défauts qui sont grands.

La tendance morale, nettement soulignée, de certains *Fastnachtspiele* a été souvent relevée par ses adversaires. Ils reprochent au poète de céder le pas au moraliste. Nous avons vu, en effet, que s'il y a chez Hans Sachs quelques farces où le comique se développe aux dépens de la moralité, il y en a beaucoup aussi où le souci de moraliser enlève tout charme à la pièce. Morale et action luttent éternellement chez notre poète; c'est tantôt l'un, tantôt l'autre qui l'emporte, selon la disposition du moment. Plusieurs de ses farces perdent ainsi toute valeur dramatique; certaines ne sont plus que des tableaux allégoriques sans vie, sans mouvement, des préceptes moraux mis à la scène et plus fades souvent que bien des fables infiniment plus brèves et plus alertes¹. Il n'y a certes pas là de quoi intéresser longtemps le public d'aujourd'hui.

Mais faut-il pour cela accumuler sur la tête de notre poète seul, tous les reproches qui, en réalité, devraient s'adresser à tout son siècle? Hans Sachs est prédicateur, mais le xvi^e siècle l'est aussi, tout entier. Si depuis Lessing et Goethe la poésie a cessé d'être l'esclave de la religion et de la morale, faut-il pour cela faire grief à notre poète de n'avoir pas devancé son temps? Comme Leonard Culmann, Manuel Gengenbach, lui aussi porte le sceau d'une époque fertile en

¹ *Fastn.* 30, 31, 14, 8.

moralistes; il ne faut pas trop lui en vouloir. Jugeons chacun d'après son époque, et ne reprochons pas à Hans Sachs d'avoir ignoré la *Dramaturgie*.

Certes, il aurait pu traiter de tels sujets non sous forme de drames, mais comme *Fabel* ou *Schwank*, genres qui exigent moins d'action dramatique. On sait pourquoi il a préféré la forme du *Fastnachtspiel*, et quel noble but il s'est proposé, en voulant rendre ces préceptes plus populaires et plus vivants.

Mais souvent Hans Sachs apporte trop peu de soin au choix des sujets. Tout lui est bon, pourvu que le sujet plaise à son esprit et à sa fantaisie. Il se soucie peu des exigences de la scène, que d'ailleurs il ne connaît qu'imparfaitement. Pour lui, tout dialogue est dramatique. Aussi le voyons-nous mettre à la scène des pièces comme *Das Gespräch Alexandri Magni mit dem Philosopho Diogeni*¹, *Der Tyrann Dionysius*² ou *Disputatio zweier Philosophen, ob es besser sey zu heiraten oder ledig zu bleiben*...³ qui pourtant ne sont pas des essais de débutant. De là encore un nouveau groupe de farces dépourvues de tout intérêt dramatique.

De plus, nous avons remarqué que très nombreux sont les *Fastnachtspiele* où Hans Sachs reprend des sujets déjà traités sous d'autres formes: *Meistergesang*, *Schwank* par exemple. Quelques-uns prennent ainsi quatre aspects différents avec évidemment quelques divergences çà et là. C'est par cette répétition des mêmes sujets que s'explique la masse énorme des productions de notre poète.

Pourquoi Hans Sachs qui, par son immense lecture, disposait d'un choix infini de sujets de tous genres, s'est-il ainsi limité dans une sphère plus restreinte? Pourquoi, renonçant à une multiplicité, à une variété qui aurait donné plus d'envergure et plus d'intérêt à son œuvre, a-t-il préféré ressasser à plusieurs reprises les mêmes fables? C'est que chez lui, le poète des heures de repos et de loisir n'oublie

¹ *Fastn.* 44.

² *Fastn.* 47.

³ *Fastn.* 71.

jamais tout à fait l'artisan, qui, toute sa vie, s'applique au même travail. Hans Sachs est ouvrier en même temps que poète, et sa poésie en témoigne. Comme un écolier, jeune apprenti en toutes sciences, à qui on distribue une tâche très diverse pour qu'il se forme à tout, il s'efforce de faire entrer tous les sujets dans tous les moules possibles. Il se forme à tous les genres comme, sous la direction de Lienhart Nunnenbeck, il s'était formé à la versification en jonglant avec de multiples « *Töne* ». C'est pourquoi il n'éprouvera aucun scrupule à écrire des pièces aussi peu dramatiques que celles que nous venons de citer.

Ailleurs, si le choix est plus judicieux, l'exécution laisse souvent à désirer. Nous ne rapellerons pas les imperfections dramatiques déjà notées. Quelquefois le nœud de l'action est suffisamment préparé et se dénoue bien; mais il n'en est pas toujours de même. Les personnages sont le plus souvent bien caractérisés et leur façon de penser, de parler et d'agir convient à leur caractère et à leur rôle; mais quelques-uns nous semblent étranges, car ils ne correspondent en rien à la réalité; cela choque la vraisemblance que des personnages symboliques s'entretiennent avec des hommes en chair et en os.

Nous avons vu ce que valent ses pièces; nous ne lui reprocherons pas de n'avoir pas connu, dès le début de sa carrière, les règles essentielles de la poésie dramatique, ni de montrer plus tard encore, certaines déficiences qui prouvent son ignorance de la scène. Y a-t-il des écrivains qui, avant lui ou en même temps, l'aient dépassé dans ce domaine? Ses spectateurs, ses auditeurs ne se souciaient guère de ces lois qu'ils connaissaient encore moins que lui; cela ne les empêchait pas de s'amuser royalement. A son époque, Hans Sachs avait tout à faire dans cette voie: il lui a fallu créer la forme dramatique, et si, un peu plus tard, les progrès sont rapides au théâtre, c'est à lui surtout qu'on le doit; c'est lui, en réalité, qui fraye le chemin aux comédiens anglais. Aussi sa place dans l'histoire du théâtre est-elle éminente, bien

qu'il n'ait pas place parmi les grands dramaturges de tous les temps.

Si nous n'avions pas peur de montrer trop d'indulgence, nous avouerions que ces imperfections mêmes donnent un certain attrait aux pièces de notre poète. De même, on aime à voir ces émaux anciens, où la pose symétrique des personnages et l'ignorance de la perspective révèlent l'enfance naïve de l'art. Qui ne sourirait de quelques-unes de ses naïvetés? par exemple, quand Apollon doit allumer les lampes du ciel¹ ou quand Pancraz, ne pouvant quitter la scène comme le lui ordonne Lisabetta (car alors on ne l'entendrait plus), s'éloigne seulement de quelques pas, puis crie très fort, comme s'il était loin², ou encore quand deux jeunes gens, à leur arrivée, au lieu de frapper à la porte de leur belle, frappent simplement la terre du pied, car il n'y a pas de porte sur la scène; et la jeune fille qui se trouve à trois pas d'eux dit naïvement à la servante:

« Mich dünckt, man klopff an unserm hauss,
Geh, thu baldt auff, doch schaw vor naus »

Fastn. 39: 280.

Car la mise en scène est encore très primitive. On lit dans R. Genée³ que le prologue d'une pièce jouée à Nuremberg en 1534, informe les assistants que la scène représente un jardin:

« Dieser Gart ist gar hübsch und schön,
Von Kräutern und viel Bäumen grün,
Welchen, so euch zu sehn gelüst,
Gar scharfe Brillen ihr haben müsst ».

Cette crédulité, cette facilité d'illusion donnent certes un charme particulier au théâtre de Hans Sachs. Il y a je ne sais quoi de touchant dans cet art naissant qui, avec la candeur naïve de l'enfance, représente les choses comme il peut, sans fard, sans détours, avec une force d'illusion qui est le propre du premier âge. Ne chicanons donc pas plus l'auteur sur l'imperfection des accessoires que ne le faisaient

¹ *Fastn.* 30: 59/62.

² *Fastn.* 74: 268/269.

³ R. GENÉE: Lehr- und Wanderjahre des deutschen Schauspiels, p. 130.

les spectateurs auxquels il s'adressait. Le théâtre de Shakespeare lui-même n'est-il pas sur ce point tout aussi primitif?

Faisant un effort pour adopter la mentalité de ses contemporains, passons de même sur les anachronismes qui se rencontrent dans ses drames à sujet antique. Il est permis de sourire quand nous voyons paraître un « *Walprueder* » au temps de Thalès¹, ou quand nous apprenons comment fut enterré le fils de Solon le sage:

als man die leich gen kirchen trüeg,
Schueler und priester vorher züeg.

.....
Man hort auch aller glocken thön.

Fastn. 71: 283.

Mais il ne faut pas en vouloir à Hans Sachs de ne connaître l'antiquité qu'à travers son époque. Il la voit comme la voyait tout son siècle, comme la voyaient les peintres et les sculpteurs, ingénument, à leur propre image. Comment aurait-il pu se demander ce qu'étaient Athènes et Rome, il y a des siècles, alors que les savants eux-mêmes n'y songeaient pas? D'ailleurs il n'y a pas si longtemps que tout contresens historique a disparu du théâtre moderne. Pardonnons donc au poète une imperfection qui est le trait distinctif de l'art de son temps.

Il faut reconnaître toutefois que ses toutes premières œuvres sont tout à fait imparfaites et pleines de défauts qui révèlent un débutant jeune et encore inexpérimenté. De plus, ces pièces sont d'une lecture difficile aujourd'hui, parce qu'elles sont bourrées d'allusions à des livres et contes de toute nature, si répandus au xvi^e siècle dans tous les milieux de l'Allemagne, et que notre poète connaissait mieux que personne.

Un autre reproche que nous lui adresserons, c'est le goût équivoque de quelques plaisanteries, l'emploi assez fréquent de mots malpropres. Il est vrai que nous sommes loin d'en rencontrer autant chez lui que dans les *Fastnachtspiele* du siècle précédent. Non seulement la population des villes, mais encore les fils libertins des grands négociants de Nurem-

¹ *Fastn.* 71.

berg semblent avoir pris grand plaisir à ces plaisanteries grossières. C'est que le niveau moral de l'époque n'était pas précisément très élevé. Au reste, on conçoit facilement quel dérèglement de mœurs pouvait favoriser une ville de l'importance de Nuremberg, enrichie par tous les étrangers qui y circulaient: Hongrois, Esclavons, Turcs, Arabes, Français, Anglais et Hollandais, nous dit Rosenplüt lui-même, non sans quelque orgueil. Quant à notre poète, de même qu'il s'est écarté des sujets immoraux que ceux-ci semblaient rechercher, il évite leur langage cru, même dans les situations équivoques. « *Gegenüber den Spielen seiner Vorgänger* », dit Mummenhoff¹, « *sind die seinigen wie Tauben unter Raben.* » Si parfois il semble se complaire dans la description de choses peu décentes, il faut avouer que c'est une exception. Ses contemporains, d'ailleurs, prétendaient que « *naturalia non sunt turpia* », et loin d'être choqués par de telles crudités, ils semblaient y prendre grand plaisir.

Les autres libertés de langage que notre poète se permet de temps à autre, sont le plus souvent assaisonnées d'un tel humour que l'on ne peut vraiment s'en choquer, si l'on tient compte de la rudesse de langage habituel en ces temps. Comme dans les farces de nos aïeux où l'esprit gaulois se donnait libre carrière, les plaisanteries de Hans Sachs n'ont rien d'attique, et nous ne pouvons nous empêcher aujourd'hui de faire un peu la moue, tandis que les contemporains les dégustaient avec délices.

Les crudités de Hans Sachs s'expliquent non seulement par le manque de sentiment des convenances général à cette époque (qu'on songe aux mariages de patriciens et autres cérémonies officielles qui admettaient au bal les femmes de mauvaises mœurs de la ville!), mais encore par le caractère du Carnaval au xvi^e siècle. Les réjouissances de la Fastnacht déchaînaient tous les ans dans la ville l'exubérance impertinente en même temps que les instincts cyniques du peuple,

¹ MUMMENHOFF: *Hans Sachs*: 1894.

ordinairement contenus par la sévérité inflexible du conseil de ville. Ainsi on lit dans un ancien *Fastnachtspiel*:

Die vasnacht das wol machen kan,
Das nerrisch tut vil manig man
Der sich des schamt ein ander zeit.

Keller n° 153: 13/15.

De plus, ces pièces étaient destinées à être jouées sur une scène improvisée, dans une taverne le plus souvent, comme en témoignent plusieurs farces de notre poète¹. Les spectateurs, la clientèle de ces cabarets ou ceux qui y entrent pour assister à la représentation, ne peuvent se montrer très difficiles sur le goût des plaisanteries, dans ce cadre moins que solennel, et c'est ce qui excuse encore les grossièretés que nous rencontrons dans les farces de Hans Sachs.

Somme toute, on peut dire qu'il a tiré le *Fastnachtspiel* de la fange qui l'entourait, pour l'élever à un niveau plus honnête, ce qu'on ne saurait assez reconnaître en ce siècle débraillé. Il le débarrasse de sa forme impure et choquante, comme il avait débarrassé le fond de son immoralité dangereuse.

Il a encore d'autres mérites. Les *Fastnachtspiele* de Rosenplüt sont monotones, secs, ennuyeux, et nous laissent froids; les personnages sont tous taillés sur le même patron et n'ont aucun caractère. Hans Folz, avec un peu plus de vie, reste encore mécanique et monotone. Quelle animation, au contraire, quelle vie débordante chez notre poète! La vivacité, la chaleur de ses peintures est caractéristique. Mieux que dans ses comédies, il sait ici tirer parti de ses modèles; il a le don de saisir les sujets qu'il a empruntés et de les illustrer de la façon la plus vivante. Partout nous trouvons vie et mouvement; le dialogue lui-même est animé et alerte. Les personnages ne sont plus des mannequins sans vie, mais ils prennent, avec lui, forme humaine: ce sont des gens de chair et d'os qui s'agitent devant nous.

Ils sont si nettement caractérisés que chacun peut y reconnaître telle ou telle personne du voisinage, s'il ne s'y re-

¹ *Fastn.* 24.

trouve pas lui-même. L'avare Grampas, Herman Dol, le jeune Nicola, le vieil amoureux Dildapp, ne sont-ils pas des figures réelles comme en offre la vie de tous les jours? En quelques traits Hans Sachs sait nous faire un portrait vivant et vrai de tous ceux qu'il a sous les yeux. Ils sont pris sur le vif, jusque dans la façon de s'exprimer¹, jusque dans leurs comparaisons qui ont aussi leur goût de terroir. Dans les plus réussis de ses *Fastnachtspiele* on peut remarquer avec quel art il sait exprimer par le discours même des personnages, les différences de situation et de caractère, qui font mieux ressortir chacun. Lisons *Der Krämerskorb*², par exemple. Comme les trois groupes de personnages y sont finement caractérisés, et comme leur langage correspond à leur milieu! Dans *Der Tod im Stock*³, écoutez les brigands: leur âme se révèle tout entière dans leurs discours; chacun est une personne avec ses manières particulières. D'autre part, comme ils contrastent tous trois avec le moine! Il y a là vraiment des finesses, d'autant plus étonnantes que le *Knittelvers* toujours égal tend à niveler l'expression et à la rendre monotone. Dans ses premières pièces pourtant, le poète montre moins de recherche, et valets et maîtres parlent le même langage, sans essai de nuance. Ce sont là des détails importants.

De même, pour donner toujours la plus grande apparence de réalité possible à ses tableaux, Hans Sachs n'oublie aucun de ces mille petits riens qui font la vérité d'une peinture. Ainsi, il mentionne le lieu vers lequel tel personnage se dirige, celui où se passe l'action, pour créer autour de la pièce une atmosphère familière qui plaît au spectateur⁴. Les couleurs aussi parlent à l'esprit et donnent une apparence réelle. Pongracz porte un vêtement rouge⁵; telle femme a une robe *röslein rot* pour le dimanche⁶ et le paysan s'achète

¹ *Fastn.* 81 Schellentaus.

² *Fastn.* 66.

³ *Fastn.* 70.

⁴ *Fastn.* 66: 157.

⁵ *Fastn.* 74: 819.

⁶ *Fastn.* 60: 79.

du drap *gras grün*¹. Ce n'est pas dans la première auberge venue que les trois aveugles iront dépenser leur écu, c'est chez Hans Wirt à Egelsheim. Tous ces petits détails, amenés toujours avec beaucoup de naturel, qui semblent témoigner de la sincérité de l'auteur, attirent l'attention et la confiance du spectateur.

De plus, chez Hans Sachs, la souplesse de la langue se prête au réalisme de ces peintures: qu'il s'agisse de plaisanteries ou d'affaires sérieuses, toujours il trouve le mot exact ou une expression suggestive. Le langage de la vie courante, plein de termes matériels, de proverbes et de locutions usuelles, se reflète fidèlement chez lui. Ce qui lui manque de délicatesse et de pureté, il le regagne en clarté, en netteté, en mordant, sans pourtant tomber dans la grossièreté d'un Rosenplüt ou d'un Folz. Son style soutient la comparaison avec la plupart de ses contemporains: il est naïf et clair, même auprès de Murner; plus poétique, plus imagé, plus pénétrant et plus noble que Hutten, et après Luther son langage est le plus remarquable du siècle; c'est une source riche pour tout humoriste et satirique.

Ce qui attirait Goethe vers Hans Sachs, c'est surtout cette conception saine et solide de la vie, sans affectation étudiée, qui s'exprime dans un style puissant et neuf, sans recherche, sans fard, fertile en images nouvelles, plein d'humour et de bon sens au milieu de plaisanteries un peu salées. Et quelle clarté, quelle limpidité dans cette langue simple et concise! Quelle fraîcheur aussi se répand sur toute l'œuvre, dans les idées qui révèlent l'esprit du poète, comme dans la forme jeune et alerte! La simplicité de la forme convient à la modestie de ces petits drames sans prétention; c'est là un des plus grands charmes des œuvres de Hans Sachs.

Quelquefois, bien rarement il est vrai, à cette époque où les *Meistersinger* se bornent à chercher de nouveaux *Töne*, nous trouvons chez Hans Sachs quelque tableau qui révèle une nature poétique: ici le coin paisible d'un bois²,

¹ *Fastn.* 77.

² *Fastn.* 70: 32/38.

ailleurs, la mélancolie de l'hiver¹. Il n'y a pas encore là certes de la vraie poésie: il n'en faut pas chercher au siècle de la Réforme. Néanmoins ces touches sincères dénotent une âme accessible à la poésie de la nature. C'est aussi parce que Hans Sachs était poète, que l'enseignement chez lui se présente si rarement sous forme de précepte abstrait. Partout il sait l'envelopper d'un voile aimable et discret.

Comment lui en vouloir s'il est parfois malicieux et nous montre les caricatures qu'il vient d'esquisser en nous faisant poser comme modèles? Il le fait avec tant de naïveté et toujours avec une si belle humeur! Sa bonne humeur est le sceau même de ses œuvres; ses plaisanteries de gavroche, l'humour intarissable de ses *Fastnachtspiele*, la gaieté franche et saine sont de lui, et de lui seulement. On y lit le plaisir réel qu'il a pris à sa tâche, tâche qu'il s'était imposée lui-même avec désintéressement et modestie, et on y prend plaisir soi-même.

Quel agrément c'est aussi de voir vivre et agir devant soi tout un siècle disparu, toute une époque, si profondément riche et variée! C'est comme un écho lointain qui nous arrive. Pleines de vérité, ses peintures ont une saveur étrange, un peu rude, mais pénétrante tout de même. Portrait d'un monde, les farces de Hans Sachs sont aussi le portrait d'un homme, d'un homme qui valait la peine d'être connu.

Herneysen qui était allé le voir vers la fin de sa vie (1575), fit de notre poète, alors âgé de quatre-vingt-un ans, un portrait que celui-ci trouva d'une ressemblance parfaite. Mais, nous dit le peintre dans la *Danksagung des Malers für das Valet*², celui qui veut voir son âme et son cœur portraicturés n'a qu'à l'examiner avec soin dans ses livres; là se trouve sa véritable image³.

¹ *Fastn.* 3: 4/14.

² Hans Sachs lui avait dédié son « Valet », qu'il était occupé à transcrire au moment de sa visite, en y ajoutant séance tenante une dédicace d'une soixantaine de vers: « Hans Sachs spruch: damit er dem Maler sein Valet dedicirt » 1575.

³ Wer aber wolt sein Gmüth und Herz
Abgemaldt schawen, der sech an schmerz
In mit Fleiss in sein Büchern an
Da wird er recht Contrefet han.

En effet, les œuvres de Hans Sachs révèlent son caractère avec beaucoup de netteté; toutes portent d'une manière frappante l'empreinte de l'ouvrier qui les a façonnées.

N'est-ce pas lui qui se dépeint involontairement dans ce bourgeois qui contemple sa bibliothèque avec une fierté mêlée de vénération, car il n'a d'autre passion que celle des bons livres¹?

Ailleurs il mettra plus encore de lui-même dans ses œuvres, et sous la fiction on reconnaîtra facilement un fond de réalité vécue et profondément sentie. Ne retrouvons-nous pas dans ses deux premières farces, mais surtout dans la première, dans ce martyrologe des victimes de l'amour, un peu de l'amertume profonde restée au cœur de notre poète, après sa malheureuse idylle de München? N'est-ce pas encore un souvenir lointain qui lui dicte *Die verschwatzte Buhlschaft*²?

Mais alors même qu'il ne parle pas de lui-même ou de ses expériences personnelles, Hans Sachs sait donner aux sujets qu'il emprunte un tour qui les fait vraiment siens. C'est le souffle de son propre esprit qui anime ses personnages; sa bonhomie naïve, partout transparente, trahit l'auteur. On a dit souvent que Hans Sachs a traduit en patois nurembergeois tous les sujets qu'il a traités, et que sa sphère était avant tout et seulement celle d'un bourgeois de Nuremberg. C'est vrai. Si cela limite son talent, c'est là aussi la source des richesses de son œuvre. Notre poète est un bourgeois; bourgeois avec une solidité de caractère à toute épreuve. Tout jeune on le voit se raidir pour résister aux mauvais penchants et pour éviter l'emprise des passions dangereuses. Dans la vie privée, il prêche et pratique toutes les vertus qui constituent l'honnêteté bourgeoise: la religion du mariage, les devoirs d'éducation envers les enfants, la loyauté, le travail, la tempérance, l'économie, le respect de soi-même et l'amour du Créateur.

¹ *Fastn.* 83: 164/173 — 274/278.

² *Fastn.* 39.

Accoutumé à se discipliner lui-même, il n'a pas de mal à se soumettre à la volonté de Dieu. C'est avec la même docilité qu'il s'incline devant les décisions des autorités, bien qu'il lui en coûte quelquefois, donnant ainsi l'exemple d'une loyauté parfaite. Il faut avoir confiance dans la sagesse des autorités comme dans celle de Dieu; s'il y a des heures sombres, ne perdons jamais l'espoir.

Son optimisme reprend toujours le dessus, même dans les moments difficiles: optimisme sain qui est le fond de sa nature même, et qui s'exprime dans toute son œuvre. Des temps viendront où les hommes seront meilleurs; ayons confiance; Dieu nous aidera, tel est l'évangile de notre poète idéaliste, que sa verve humoristique saura si bien populariser.

Son âme de chrétien abrite une croyance naïve et inébranlable, celle d'un cœur simple et droit. En toute occasion, il montre un jugement sain, un esprit clairvoyant et pratique, et toujours beaucoup de bon sens. On sait comment il sut se contenter de son humble sort. Son œuvre tout entier respire cette sagesse qu'il conseille aux autres, comme seul bonheur; c'est pourquoi un de ses contemporains a pu dire avec raison: « *Ipsius libri plus doctrinae et sapientiae in se continent quam multa hujus temporis scripta, etiam eorum qui se inter sapientes numerari existimant* »¹. Oui, Hans Sachs est un sage, un humble, dont la vie exprime la philosophie la plus haute, la plus noble, la plus saine.

On ne peut manquer de remarquer aussi la droiture et la noblesse de l'homme, à travers la hauteur morale qu'il vise dans ses œuvres. Et il faut admirer l'esprit d'équité du simple artisan, qui jugeant les trois états, n'hésite pas à reconnaître les défauts de tous et du sien, mais ne craint pas de proclamer l'égalité devant Dieu et de réclamer la fraternité humaine. Et n'est-ce pas un indice de son caractère qu'il ne se soit pas contenté de dépouiller la farce de toutes les insanités qui l'encombraient, mais qu'il ait voulu aussi faire de

¹ SITZINGER: *Ein zeitgenössisches Urteil über Hans Sachs*, cité par ENGLERT: *Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturgeschichte*. 1892. P. 135.

ces drames populaires des préceptes vivants de morale pratique.

Partout d'ailleurs perce sa bonté¹, sa bienveillance, et sa bonhomie naïve mêlée même de malice. Car Hans Sachs a un grand fond de bonne humeur; c'est sa pétulante gaîté, sa verve rieuse, souvent satirique, qui fait que son œuvre est encore vivante aujourd'hui.

Car cette satire est tempérée par sa bonté; s'il raille les paysans, les femmes, les prêtres, jamais il ne fait de personnalité, de peur de blesser; et souvent nous le verrons demander pardon à ses victimes d'avoir peut-être un peu exagéré, mais certes sans penser à mal. Par contre, jamais aucune trace non plus de flatterie: Hans Sachs ne recherche pas les faveurs de ceux qu'il veut rendre meilleurs; il leur parle toujours à cœur ouvert.

Ne révèle-t-il pas son caractère enjoué et espiègle par son indulgence pour son favori Eulenspiegel ou quelque autre fourbe spirituel, comme par la joie maligne qu'il éprouve à se jouer des gens d'Eglise? Mais un peu de sérieux vient toujours tempérer cette gaîté exubérante, et comme chez notre poète, gaîté et sérieux savent s'allier dans son œuvre en une harmonie féconde et agréable.

Nous avons vu ailleurs comment Hans Sachs sait représenter les mœurs et les idées de son époque. S'il a si bien su comprendre et refléter la vie de la bourgeoisie, seule maîtresse alors, c'est qu'il en était issu et vivait tous les jours avec elle. Aussi est-ce chez lui que nous irons chercher l'image de la société contemporaine avec ses vertus et ses travers, ses besoins, ses aspirations, ses rires joyeux, ses douleurs et ses plaintes. Car Hans Sachs dominait son époque; il est en quelque sorte le foyer dans lequel convergent toutes les tendances de son siècle; mieux que personne, il vibre à l'unisson avec son temps. C'est parce qu'il est enfant du peuple qu'il comprend le peuple et sait se faire entendre par

¹ *Fastn.* 1: 348/350: « Die betrübten man trösten sol.

Wo sich ein mensch in leidt thut üben,
Sol man in weiter nit betrüben. »

Id. Fastn. 44: 162/166.

lui: ce que les humanistes disaient aux érudits dans leur langue savante, lui le dit aux profanes dans son patois clair et vigoureux, et tous comprennent.

Le siècle qui avait produit un homme aussi fougueux mais aussi grondeur que Luther, où Hutten se laissait aller à une fureur sans frein, où Murner s'efforçait d'imiter la grossièreté du vulgaire, ce siècle avait besoin d'un poète calme et doux, toujours semblable à lui-même, noble dans sa modestie, qui, comme Mélanchton, répandit sa semence dans la foule, et, se tenant loin de toute querelle théologique, aimait mieux, au lieu de lancer l'anathème, railler les travers humains avec esprit.

Enfant de Nuremberg, il s'adresse avant tout à des enfants de Nuremberg et tous les personnages dans ses mains deviennent des Nurembergeois; comme lui, son talent est circonscrit dans une sphère modeste mais honnête, celle de la classe à laquelle il appartient. S'il n'a pas visé à des hauteurs inaccessibles, il n'est pas non plus descendu comme ses devanciers dans la boue de la plèbe, il a su choisir une voie médiane. Rien de creux, de maladif ou d'enflé dans son œuvre. Elle est comme lui, simple et vraie, animée de sentiments humains, et malgré tout personnelle et originale.

Que dire de lui après Goëthe, Gervinus, Goëdeke et tant d'autres admirateurs si pleins d'autorité? Faut-il le juger dans son temps? Puisque plus que personne il appartient à son époque, ce n'est que justice de l'y replacer. S'il y tient une des premières places pour sa valeur morale, sans doute la première place lui est réservée parmi les auteurs dramatiques. Luther, Mélanchton et tous les lettrés de son temps reconnaissent sa sagesse et prennent plaisir à le lire et à louer ses œuvres. Ce n'est pas un maigre mérite: *« Wer den Besten seiner Zeit genug getan, der hat gelebt für alle Zeiten »*.

Même de nos jours, la plupart des farces de notre poète auraient beaucoup de succès, non seulement auprès du peuple, mais parmi les connaisseurs. Les quelques pièces qui furent représentées en 1894 à l'occasion du quatrième centenaire

de sa naissance remportèrent partout un très vif succès. N'est-ce pas suffisant pour affirmer que Hans Sachs ne ferait pas mauvaise figure sur une scène du *xx^e* siècle? Et on lit avec plaisir une œuvre aussi attrayante par elle-même que par l'âme qui l'anime.

Somme toute, Hans Sachs a su élever la farce à un échelon digne du drame plus sérieux, sans qu'elle perde complètement sa turbulente gaîté. Il possédait un réel talent poétique qui plaisait à ses contemporains. Quant à nous, malgré ses défauts, nous ne pouvons méconnaître chez lui certaines qualités techniques, et, si le fond convient parfois mal à la scène, son œuvre possède toujours les qualités propres à la vraie poésie: « elle ennoblit l'âme, élève l'esprit et console les affligés ».

Hans Sachs a voulu distraire le peuple et chasser ses idées noires; jusqu'à son dernier souffle il a tenu à soutenir de son aide morale ceux qui souffraient. A-t-il atteint son but? Sans doute en une période de chaos et de troubles, de deuils et de guerres intestines, ces quelques farces ont-elles soulagé et distrait pour un temps le public auquel notre poète s'adressait. Nous-même, bien des fois, en des moments pénibles, quand de sombres pensées avaient envahi notre âme, nous avons trouvé auprès de lui un peu de réconfort; et le calme bienfaisant qui plane au-dessus de son œuvre a reposé notre cœur. Aussi, qu'on veuille bien nous pardonner, si nous montrons une indulgence peut-être excessive pour un poète qui nous a si profondément intéressé et touché. Qu'on veuille bien se donner la peine de puiser dans ses œuvres: on trouvera en lui un ami sincère, une âme chaude et vibrante qui attire les cœurs.



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APPENDICE

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N ^o	TITRE DES FASTNACHTSPIELE	DATE	SOURCE	REMARQUES
1	Von der Eygenschaft der lieb ...	8 janvier 1518	expérience personnelle, à l'occasion de lectures (Boccace, Nicolaus von Wyle, Métamorphoses d'Ovide.	cf. «Kampfgespräch von der Lieb» 1 ^{er} mai 1515.
2	Das Hoffgesindt Veneris	1517	Hans von Sachsenheim: «Mörin» en partie	cf. P. Gengenbachs «Gouchmat».
3	Reichtum wider Armuet	?	pièce perdue	cf. A. L. Stiefel: Litteraturlblatt f. germ. u. rom. Phil. 1892.
4	Das böse Weib	8 octobre 1533	sujet emprunté à la vie journalière (Keller Fastn. I p. 47-52 (?) + H. Folz Gedicht: Von einem Wirtzknecht ou } et d'une Hausmagd. et von einer Frauen und ir Maid, wie sie mit einander kriegten (?)	cf. Lier: Mittell. des Vereins z. Gesch. der Stadt Nürnberg 1889 p. 130. cf. ch. VII.
5	Richter, Buler, Spieler und Trinker	? 1535 (?)	Beroaldus-Franck «Declamatio» principalement et détails ça et là (cf. Stiefel: Germania 36 p. 7/8)	cf. Szamatolsky: Vierteljahrschrift f. Litt. Gesch. II, p. 90-97.
6	Der ungeraten Sun	sept.-oct. (?) 1536 (?)	Quelques emprunts à S. Brant: «Narrenschiff» N ^o 103	—
7	Der Karg und Mildt	? 1537 (?)	Pauli «Schimpf und Ernst» 178 (?)	cf. Gedicht 1539.
8	Der Fürwitz	12 juillet 1538	influence de Beroaldus «Declamatio» (?) S. Brant «Narrenschiff» (Strasbourg 1494) (?) Wickram «Narrenreissen» 1537 (?) Wickram «Frau Eckhart 1538 (?)	cf. Schwank 25 mai 1563.
9	Die sechs Klagenden	21 décembre 1535 ..	Rosenplüt: Gedicht: «Die XV Clage» Keller Fastn. III. p. 1111 (?)	cf. Stiefel: H. S. Forschungen, p. 68.
10	Die Rockenstuben	28 décembre 1536 ..	?	cf. Stiefel: Germania 36, p. 9.
11	Das Narren schneyden	3 octobre (?) 1557 (?) sept.-oct. (?) 1536 (?)	influence de S. Brant: «Narrenschiff» (?)	sur les Rockenstuben, cf. Wendeler Schnorrs Archiv VII, 332.
12	Das Pachenholen im deutschen Hof	21 novembre 1539 ..	sujet emprunté à la vie.	—

N ^o	TITRE DES FASTNACHTSPIELE	DATE	SOURCE	REMARQUES
13	Die funf elenden Wandrer	15 décembre 1539 ..	Rosenplüt: Gedicht «Die XV clage» Keller F. III p. 1111 (?)	rapprocher F. 9. cf. Mg. 13 oct. 1536 (Gœdeke: Dicht. von H. S. I. p. 97). cf. Spruchgedicht: Keller 5, 282.
14	Der Heuchler	30 décembre 1540 ..	Plutarque: «Plutarchi von Cheronea guter Sitten 21 Bücher» (?)	Rapprocher F. 31. cf. Spruch: «Der ehrabschneider und heuchler die zweyschädlichste thier», Keller 7, 319.
15	Purger, Pauer und Edelman, die holen krapffen	31 décembre 1540 ..	Personnel	cf. Mg.: Der purger, pauer und edelman, 12 mai 1549.
16	Der schwanger Pauer	25 novembre 1544 ..	Boccace Decam. IX. 3	cf. Schwank: Der schwanger karger Man Kalendrîn (Keller, 5, 126). Mg. VII 3. als Kalendrîn, dem kargen. nov. 1544. cf. anciens Arztspiele; Folz, etc.
17	Die Laister Artzney	10 décembre 1544 ..	?	—
18	Der Teuffel mit dem alten Weyb	19 novembre 1545 ..	?	cf. Gœdeke: Nachweisungen dans éd. Oosterley, de Kirchhof's Wendunmut. cf. Gœdeke: Dichtungen von H. S. I, 195.
19	Der Kauffmann mit den alten Weibern	27 novembre 1549 ..	Pauli, «Schimpf und Ernst» 522	cf. Mg. dans Gœtz: H. S. IV, p. 75.
20	Der Nasentanz	4 février 1550	Fastn: «Der alt Haudentanz» (?) Keller N ^o 67 II 580	cf. Schwank, Keller 5, 276. cf. Mg. dans manuscrit de Dresden, M. II. Bl. 378.
21	Der gestolen Faenacht Hon	4 octobre 1550	sujet puisé dans la réalité	—
22	Der farendt Schuller im Paradeiss	8 octobre 1550	Pauli «Schimpf und Ernst» N ^o 463 (?) + Bebel: Geschwänke 2, 158 (?) ou fabliau français ?	Nachweisungen dans Pauli (ed. Oester- ley), p. 527. cf. Mg. manuscrit de Dresden M. 98, 268 (1549, 7). cf. Z. f. v. L. R. L., N. F. IV, p. 440/445 (Stiefel) et Z. f. d. Ph. XXIII p. 436/451.

N ^o	TITRE DES FASTNACHTSPIELE	DATE	SOURCE	REMARQUES
23	Der jung Kauffman Nicola mit seiner Sophia	10 octobre 1550	Boccace Decam. VIII 10.	-
24	Fraw Warheytt will niemandt herbergen	10 novembre 1550 ..	Pauli N ^o 3 + N ^o 4 + (?) original latin du «Gespräch von einem Waldtmann» (Weller: Ann. II p. 239)	cf. Spruchgedicht, Keller III, 311.
25	Der Pawr mit dem Kuedlieb ...	25 novembre 1550 ..	Pauli: «Schimpf und Ernst» (Strasbourg 1533) N ^o 332	cf. Schwank, 11 déc. 1557 (Keller 9, 320 et Nachweisungen Götze 186). cf. Stiefel H. S., Forschungen, p. 138. cf. Oesterley, p. 553. cf. Keller F. III, p. 1214 et 1248: «Von einem Kudlieb».
26	Von Joseph und Melliso, auch König Salomon	29 novembre 1550 ..	Décameron IX. 9. + «Frag und Antwort Salomons und Marcolff» + Spiel von König Salomon und Marcollo (?) Keller II p. 523.	cf. Keller-Götze, 14, p. 124.
27	Das Wildbad	17 décembre 1550 ..	Dec. X 2	cf. Götz H. S. IV, 145.
28	Der böss Rauch	13 janvier 1551	H. Folz Gedicht: «Ein Ilet genant der poss rauch» Keller F. III p. 1278	cf. «Farce nouvelle, fort joyeuse du Pont aux Asnes» Ancien theâtre français. Viollet Le Duc, II, 25. cf. Mg. 1537: Gedeke Dicht. von H. S. I. 101.
29	Die drey Studenten	?	perdu	cf. Keller 9, 108. cf. Mg. mars 1554, XIV, Bl. 49. cf. Gesamtabenteuer I, p. 82 de F. H. v. d. Hagen.
30	Zwischen dem Gott Apolline und dem Römer Fabio	2 (?) septembre 1551	?	cf. Schwank, 30 janv. 1548 «Die drey schalkhaften Studenten». cf. Mg.: X, Bl. 13 et XI, Bl. 96.
31	Der halb Freundt	28 août 1551	Petrus Alfonsus dans Steinhöwels Aesop (ed. Oesterley p. 295) + Plutarque (?) cf. F 14.	cf. Gespräch 30 août 1558 (Keller 7, 278) «Gespräch des Römers Fabii mit dem Gott Jupiter». cf. Gedeke: Verweise dans Everyman. cf. Gesta Romanorum: ed. Oesterley N ^o 129, p. 733. cf. Petrus Alfonsus: discipline cler- icallis 16. cf. Valentin Schmidt: zu Petrus Al- fonsus, p. 94. cf. aussl Fastn. 14 et Mg. 10 mai 1540 (dans Gedeke: I, 249).

N ^o	TITRE DES FASTNACHTSPIELE	DATE	SOURCE	REMARQUES
32	Der unsersetzlich Geltzhunger ...	5 septembre 1551 ..	Steinhöwel Aesop — trois histoires (ed. Oesterley p. 303, 306, 309) sans doute encore autre source.	cf. Gesta Romanorum 118. cf. Rudolf von Habsburgs Leben.
33	Der podenlos Pfaffensack	?	perdu	cf. Mg. XI, Bl. 21, Getze III, p. 14. cf. Schwank: «Der Bauer mit dem bodenlosen Sack».
34	Das Kelberbrüten.....	7 octobre 1551	Kirchoffs Wendunmuth I 81 (?)	cf. Schwank: 9 nov. 1557. Mg. 13 mai 1547 (Mg. IX, Bl. 104). cf. Bebel: Faetlarum liber I «de fatuo rustico».
35	Die späch Bulerey	20 octobre 1551	«Die wehen Pullerey» (?) Keller: lit. Verein N ^o 35 p. 150/160	cf. Z. d. Altertum, XIII, p. 359. cf. Mg. 14 oct. 1547 IX, Bl. 272. Mg. 6 janv. 1533, IV, Bl. 105-108.
36	Der Pawren Knecht wil zwo Frawen haben	21 octobre 1551	version allemande du fabliau «du valet aux douze fames» (Barbazan. M ^{con} III p. 148) Legrand III p. 379.	cf. Mg. XI, 290, 12 juin 1550. cf. Kurz: Burkard Waldis: Esop. III, 16. cf. Kirchof Wendunmuth I, 73, Oesterleys Nachweisungen. cf. Legrand III, 379.
37	Der farendt Schuler mit dem Teuffelbannen	5 novembre 1551	Rosenplitt: Schwank «Von einem varnden Schuler» (Keller Fastn. p. 1172-1176)	cf. Mg. XI, 60. cf. Geedeke: Schwänke des XVI. Jh. N ^o 192. cf. Reinhold Köhler: «Kunst über alle Künste: ein weib gut zu machen» p. 29. cf. Gesamtabenteur III, p. 29 — Bemerkungen zu N ^o 61. W. Hertz: Spielmannsbuch, p. 355 sq. cf. Dunlop-Liebrecht, p. 209 et 486. cf. H. Kurz: B. Waldis Aesop, Bd. II Lesearten, p. 169.
38	Das helas Eysen	16 novembre 1551 ..	Das helze isen (v. d. Hagen: Gesamtabenteur II, 373)	cf. Pauli: Schitopf und Ernst, 227. cf. Schwabenspiegel, éd. Lassberg Register, p. 260. cf. Dahn: Bausteine, II, 48. cf. Schwank, 11 nov. 1548. cf. Mg. X, 361, 1 ^{er} nov. 1548. cf. H. S. Forschungen 107.

N ^o	TITRE DES FASTNACHTSPIELE	DATE	SOURCE	REMARQUES
39	Von der unglückhaften, ver- schwätzten Bulschafft	9 août 1552	?	—
40	Der Parteckensack	2 décembre 1552 ...	?	—
41	Der gestolen Pachen	6 décembre 1552 ...	Decam. VIII. 6	cf. Mg. Ein karger Bauer het ein Saw gestochen. Dresden, Hs. M. 190, Bl. 339. cf. Neumann Z. v. Lit. Gesch. I, 161.
42	Der Fawr in dem Fegfwer	9 décembre 1552 ...	Decam. III. 8. (Steinhöwel Bl. 121a) (Litt. Ver. Bd. 51 p. 216)	cf. Mg., man list in Cento novella... cf. v. d. Hagen: Gesamtkabenteuer. Remarques de la 45 ^e histoire.
43	Die listig Bulerin	17 décembre 1552 ..	Decam. VII. 6	cf. V. Schmidt (Beiträge z. rom. Poesie, Berlin, 1818, p. 69). cf. Keller, Roman des sept sages: introd., p. 115. cf. Keller, Dyoctetianus Leben: Introd. p. 46.
44	Gesprech Alexandri Magni mit dem Philosopho Diogeni	30 décembre 1560 (?)	Plutarque-Eppendorf: Vie d'Alexandre 14	Daté, cf. Gœtze F. 4 IX. cf. Gespräch id. cf. Gesta Romanorum: éd. Oosterley, N ^o 183, p. 742.
45	Der gross Eyferer, der sein Weib Beicht höret	14 janv. 1563 (ou 1553?)	Decam. VII. 5	cf. Mg. VI. 56. In cento novella ich lase..... cf. Schwank: der gross Eyferer. cf. Wendunmuth, 3, 245, Remarques. cf. V. Schmidt (Beiträge... 69).
46	Das Weib im Brunnen	5 janvier 1553	Decam. VII. 4	cf. Molière. cf. Val. Schmidt l' c, p. 66 sq. cf. Keller: Roman des sept sages, 189. cf. Keller: Dyoctetianus. Introd., p. 55. cf. Pauli, p. 549, Remarques du N ^o 678. cf. Mg., das Weib im brunnen — Ein man ser eyffern was...

N ^o	TITRE DES FASTNACHTSPIELE	DATE	SOURCE	REMARKES
47	Der Tyrann Dionisius mit Damone seine Glückseligkeit halber	28 janvier 1553	Petrarque: Rerum memorandarum III. 23 dans Gedenkbuch aller Handlungen etc., ver- deutsch durch Magistrum Stephanum Vigi- lium Paclmontanum + Scherz mit der Wahrheyt (ed. 1550 fol. III)	cf. Mg.: das hanget Schwert, 21 janv. 1546. Mg. 1er avril 1536, et Stiefel, Germanla 36, 209. cf. Osterley: Kirchofs Wendunmuth V, p. 75.
48	Reichs tags Deutschlands.....	?	perdu.	—
49	Das böes Weyb mit den Worten, Würzen und Stein gut zu machen	4 septembre 1553 ..	Pauli: «Schimpf und Ernst», N ^o 134..... et influence de F. 28.	cf. Mg. 5 févr. 1537. cf. F. 28.
50	Der verdorben Edelmann mit dem weichen Beht	9 septembre 1553 ..	Pauli, N ^o 503	cf. Mg.: der Edelman mit dem gueten pet.
51	Eulenspiegel mit den Blinden..	4 (?) ou 14 (?) ou 24 (?) septembre 1553	+ Petrarca Vigilius II, 37 fol. 24. + Scherz mit der Wahrheyt, 36. Histoire d'Eulenspiegel (Lappenberg Uelenspiegel, p. 270) N ^o 71 et version allemande du fabliau de Cortebarbe (?)	cf. Shakespeare: Timon. cf. Gil Vicente: farya dos Almocreves. cf. Mg. 26 janv. 1547, Eulenspiegel mit den 12 blinden. cf. Pauli: Schimpf und Ernst, 646. cf. Cortebarbe: Les trois aveugles de Compiègne.
52	Wie Gott der Herr Adam und Eva ihre Kinder segnet	23 septembre 1553 .	Dialogue d'Erasmus Alberus «Von der Schlangen Verführung» (?) + Joh. Agricola «Sprichwörter» (Goedeke: Schwänke des 16. Jh. p. 24). + Melanchthon, lettre du 23 mai 1539 (?) + source inconnue.	cf. Mg. 25 août 1547. cf. Comedie, 6 nov. 1553. cf. Schwank, 6 janv. 1558. cf. le dialogue d'Alberus dans: Z. f. d. Ph. 21, p. 419/461. cf. Schorrs Archiv XII, 177/184.
53	Der Ketzermeister mit den vil Kessel suppen	2 octobre 1553	Boccace: Decam. I. 6	cf. Mg. 5 déc. 1544. cf. Goedeke: Dicht. des H. S. I, 160.
54	Der Bauer mit dem Pflerr	12 octobre 1563 (ou 1553 ?)	?	cf. Gesamtabenteurer II, p. 265: «der wibe list».
55	Der schalkhaftig Pawren Knecht	?	perdu	cf. Mg. 3 oct. 1548. —

N°	TITRE DES FASTNACHTSPIELE	DATE	SOURCE	REMARQUES
56	Die Burgerin mit dem Thumbherrn	24 octobre 1553	Gesta Romanorum (?) Keller p. 115, ch. 76. Sept sages, quelle version ? 1476 ? et sans doute version allemande d'un fabliau.	cf. F. H. v. d. Hagen, Gesamtabenteuer I, p. 87. cf. Keller: introd. des Sept Sages, p. 201 (1836). cf. Keller: introd. de Diocletianus Leben de H. v. Büchel, p. 56. cf. Ritter vom Thurm, 1538, Bl. 21/23. cf. persische sieben weisern: «die Hündin». cf. Keller: introd. aux Sept Sages, p. 146. cf. Keller: introd. à Diocletianus Leben p. 47. cf. F. H. v. d. Hagen: Gesamtabenteuer I 9 et I, p. 116. cf. Keller, IV, p. 2745 et Keller Fastn. I, p. 277. cf. Bartsch, Nd. Gedichte N° 53 (Iltt. Verein Stuttgart, p. 84/97).
57	Die alt verschlagen Kuplerin mit dem Thumbherrn	27 octobre 1563	K. von Würzburg (?) «alten Weibes list» (?) (v. d. Hagen) + Keller Fastn. N° 37, p. 277/282 (?)	cf. Pauli: «Schimpf u. Ernst», N° 650. cf. Mg. VIII, 2 mai 1546 — Mg. X 27 avril 1548 — Mg. XII, 21 juin 1551. cf. Schwank, 9 févr. 1558. cf. Mg. 5 oct. 1537 et Mg. 26 mai 1545. cf. H. Morlini: «De viro qui uxoris adem perditatus est», nouvelle 23. cf. V. Schmidt, zu Discipul. Clericalis, cf. éd. Oesterley et remarques, p. 716. cf. W. Elaner: Za. f. vergl. Litt.-Gesch. Bd. I, p. 221. cf. Tobler Z. f. rom. Phil. X, 1886, p. 476. cf. Mg. 12 sept. 1545.
58	Eulenspiegel mit der Pfaffen Kellerin und dem Piert	16 décembre 1553 ..	Eulensp. 38	
59	Der Rosdlieb zu Fünssing	27 décembre 1553 ..	+ Folz. Arztspiel (Keller N° 120). ?	
60	Der dot Man	11 janvier 1554	Pauli: «Schimpf und Ernst» 144	
61	Das wehent Huentlein	25 janvier 1554	Gesta Romanorum (Cammerland, Strasbourg 1538, fol. 186) + Steinhöwel «Aesop», «von dem alten wyb und dem wahnenden hündlin» (Oesterley, p. 324)	

N ^o	TITRE DES FASTNACHTSPIELE	DATE	SOURCE	REMARQUES
62	Der alt wol erzawst Pueter mit seiner Zauberey	1 ^{er} février 1554	Boccace IX, 5	cf. Mg. 10 mars 1548 et Mg. 27 février 1555.
63	Die wunderlichen Man gschlacht zu machen	24 avril 1554	Pauli N ^o 135	cf. Oosterley zu Pauli, p. 489.
64	Der los Man mit dem munketen jungen Welb	24 mai 1554	Joh. Pauli: «Schimpf und Ernst» (Straasbourg 1535 N ^o 124), (Oosterley: Anhang 22) et peut-être Pauli N ^o 205 (?)	cf. Mg. 13 déc. 1547. cf. Gedeke: Dicht. von H. S. I, p. 251.
65	Der Pfarrer mit sein eprecher Fawern	30 mai 1554	?	cf. Mg. 13 sept. 1544. cf. Schwank, 15 sept. 1544. cf. Luthers Tischreden IX, § 64. cf. Hans Vogel, 1545 — Dresden Hds. M. 8, 534.
66	Der Kremer Korb	19 juillet 1554	?	cf. Mg. VI, 13: 16 juillet 1543 et Mg. XI 228: avril 1550. cf. Benedix: Eigensinn. cf. Leon Gozian: «Dien mercl, le couvert eat mis».
67	Sant Petter leczet sich unden auf Erden	28 août 1554	cf. Mg. 8 oct. 1546.
68	Der Kampff fraw Armut mit fraw Glück	5 septembre 1554 ..	Boccace «De casibus virorum illustrum» trad. Ziegler fév. 1545, fol. 57 et 58	cf. Kampfgesr. 7 mai 1545. cf. Mg. mai 1545.
69	Der plint Messner mit dem Pfarrer und seim welb	25 octobre 1554	?	cf. Mg. sept. 1549.
70	Der Dot im Stock	8 août 1555	fabliau français (?)	cf. 20 janv. 1547 (Gedeke, Dicht. von H. S. I, p. 225) et remarques. cf. «die drei Kreuze» de Gisbert Frel- herr von Vincke. cf. Chaucer: Pardoner Tale. cf. Cento Nouvelle Ant. (N ^o 82). cf. Paris: Fabliau Mas. fr. IV, 83.
71	Daputado, ob peser heyraten sei oder ledig zu pleiben	27 septembre 1555..	Plutarque-Boner: Viede Solon (Kolmar 1541, Bl. 47) influence de Albrecht von Eybe: Ob ein Manne sey zu nemen ein elichs weyb oder nit. et de N. von Wyle (6): ob einem alten Mann gepture ein elchweyb zu nemen. + Sebastian Franck: Sieben Weisen aus Græcia (?)	cf. Mg. 21 févr. 1542 (Gedeke H. S. I. p. 131. cf. Spruchgedicht, 25 mai 1563 (?)

N°	TITRE DES FASTNACHTSPIELE	DATE	SOURCE	REMARQUES
72	Eulenspiegel mit dem Pelz- waschen	5 février 1556	Eulenspiegel 30	cf. Mg. 11 mai 1546.
73	Der Knab Lucius Paprius Cursor	8 février 1556	Pauli N° 392	cf. Mg. 23 déc. 1545 et Mg. XI Bl. 302.
			+ Ritter vom Thurm (?) 1538, Bl. 32b.	cf. Anlu-Gelle.
			+ Boners Edelstein (?) N° 97.	cf. Leonard Culman Fastn.
74	Die kuplet Schwieger mit dem alten Kaufman	17 mars 1556	1° Aesop (Steinhöwel) Oesterley, p. 331. 2° Aesop (Steinhöwel) Oesterley, p. 336. 3° Renner (?) (H. von Trimberg) ou Convivalium sermones (Gast) (?)	cf. Gredeke: Grundriss II p. 381 N° 271. cf. Stiefel Germania 36 p. 52. cf. Mg. 20 sept. 1547 et Mg. 22 août 1553 M. G. 12, 189, et Mg. 30 mars 1549 et Mg. 8 fév. 1550. cf. Spruchgedicht 1550 (cf. Schweitzer p. 438). cf. Ritter vom Thurm 24 (1538). cf. Petrus Alfonsus Ch. 11. cf. Gesta Romanorum ch. 123. cf. Mg. 31 mars 1556. cf. Keller F. I, N° 21, 53. cf. H. Kab de bo: Dicht. des H. S. zur Gesch. der Stadt Wien 1878 p. 97 sq. cf. Osw. Zingerle: Sterzinger Spiele (Wiener Neudrucke II N° 26). cf. Stiefel H. S. Forschungen, 128/130. cf. Mg. 12 juin 1556. cf. Schwank 13 juillet 1557. cf. G. Brevis: Belfagor. cf. Nicolo Macchiavelli: Belfagor et Straparola. cf. Dunlop-Liebrecht p. 273.
75	Der Neidhart mit dem Feyhel.	9 février 1557	Schwankbuch von Neidhart. + peut-être un Neidhartspiel (?)	
76	Der Dewffel nam ein alt Weib ..	24 septembre 1557 ..	?	
77	Eulenspiegel mit dem platen Hostuech und dem Parn	30 septembre 1557 ..	Eulenspiegel 68.	
78	Der Wueher und ander Beschwerd	23 décembre 1557 ..	sujet personnel	cf. Fastn. 9.
79	Der Pauer mit dem Safran	10 novembre 1558 ..	mélange de plusieurs thèmes	cf. Stiefel Germania 36 p. 57. cf. Mg. X, 20 juin 1548.

N ^o	TITRE DES FASTNACHTSPIELE	DATE	SOURCE	REMARQUES
80	Der schwanger Pauer mit dem füel	26 janvier 1559	Folz Fastn. (Keller 120) P. Probst: «vom kranken Baur» (1553? (?)	cf. Mg. 2 mai 1551. cf. Schwank, 9 déc. 1557. cf. Spiel 1558. cf. Remarques sur la 24 ^e histoire dans les Gesamtabenteuer II, p. IX. cf. Schnorrs Archiv, IV 411.
81	Der verspilt Rewter	16 novembre 1559 ..	Boccace: Decam. IX, 4	cf. Mg. 14 juillet 1545. cf. Schwank: der herr mit dem ver- spilten Knecht, 19 avril 1559.
82	Die zwen Gefattern mit dem Zorn	23 novembre 1559 ..	sujet emprunté à la vie (?)..... Renner.	cf. Schwank, 7 févr. 1550.
83	Der doctor mit der grosen Nasen	13 décembre 1559 ..	Pauli 41	cf. Mg. 29 mars 1549. cf. Mg. VIII, 14 déc. 1545.
84	Die jung Wittraw Francelsea	31 octobre 1560	Boccace: Decam. IX, 1.....	cf. Schwank, 1 ^{er} sept. 1558. cf. Oesterley: Remarques sur Pauli 220 ^e histoire. cf. K. Th. Gledertz: das nnd. Drama, p. 54.
85	Esopus, der fabelichter	23 novembre 1560 ..	Aesop (Steinhöwel) et Oesterley, p. 41.	—

Vu et admis à soutenance le 27 mars 1922

Le Doyen de la Faculté des Lettres de l'Université

de Paris

Ferd. BRUNOT

Vu et permis d'imprimer

Le Recteur de l'Académie de Paris

P. APPELL

189

Smith College Studies in Modern Languages

EDITORS

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FORTUNA IN OLD FRENCH LITERATURE

BY

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NORTHAMPTON, MASS.
SMITH COLLEGE

PARIS
LIBRAIRIE E. CHAMPION

Published Quarterly by the
Departments of Modern Languages of Smith College

15

The Collegiate Press
GEORGE BANTA PUBLISHING COMPANY
MENASHA, WISCONSIN

tu

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12

Fortuna in Old French Literature

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In a monograph published in the third volume of the present *Studies*,¹ I have made a survey of the allusions to the Goddess Fortuna in Roman Literature, in Medieval Latin, and in the Italian vernacular. The field of Old French supplements that investigation by showing a general similarity to the material that was found in Italian; and yet, at the same time, it offers some interesting and unique phases of its own. It is true that the pagan Fortuna survives here as elsewhere; that in some treatises she is annihilated, in others she is kept in what I have called the "Christian compromise," and in still others she appears in the "Christian conception." For the blows she deals mankind, moreover, the same remedies are applied: Fortuna may be confronted with fortitude, or with prudence (opposing reason to her unreason), or with devotion to the interests that lie beyond her powers—namely, spiritual concerns. Yet the Old French treatments, which maintain the same general tradition, show, nevertheless, freshness and originality in their handling.

The cult of Fortuna in France did not begin without extensive contribution from foreign sources. As a literary branch of the Romance languages, French literature derives from Latin by direct inheritance. Also one should not forget that the early Fathers of the Church were in quite as close relation with the French people as with the Romans, whose ancestral speech they borrowed. Albertus Magnus lectured in Paris, and Thomas Aquinas came there to study under his guidance. In the fourteenth century, Avignon was an Ecclesiastical center of western Christianity and orthodoxy. Not only the influence of Church philosophy but the influence of Latin and Italian art affected the French growth of Fortuna, and here too there is evidence of

¹ *Smith College Studies in Modern Languages*, III, 3-4, April and July, 1922, pp. 131-235, "The Tradition of the Goddess Fortuna."

personal contact. Alanus de Insulis, the author of elaborate allegories, was a close neighbor of France in Flanders. Dante is supposed to have visited Paris in the period of his exile.² Petrarch, as we have seen,³ went to the court of King John the Second to deliver a speech filled with observations on Fortuna; and a lively discussion followed. The French authors themselves take great pleasure in adapting the spirit and even the substance of foreign predecessors, and the whole course of French literature is obviously not an exclusive, independent development.

The appearance of Fortuna among the French, therefore, does not presuppose a transition from Italy to France like that connecting the Medieval Latin period with the paganism of Rome. If the field of Christianity was once broken into, it was desecrated for France as much as for Italy. But Fortuna took a remarkably important place in France from the start. She is mentioned in the romantic, the pseudo-historical, the allegorical, and the satiric literature. In most cases she is not discussed, but seems to be simply accepted as holding a definite and necessary place in the world. And what is perhaps most interesting is that the Christian conception, here as in Italy, seems to be an almost entirely independent growth, appearing gradually among the writers, and showing no traces of influence from abroad.

I

SIMUND DE FREINE

Le Roman de Philosophie (c. 1180) of Simund de Freine is, as its editor observes, an imitation but not a close copy of Boethius.⁴ The poem takes over Boethius's pagan Fortune. The story is as follows:

A clerk (who, we may note, is not in prison) complains against Fortune. Dame Philosophy reasons with him:—He was once rich, he is now poor; but, after all, Fortune is a worthless lady. She is changeable and deceives people. It must be expected that she will be fickle. If he submits to her methods, he cannot complain of her:⁵

² See E. G. Gardner, *Dante*, 6th ed., London, 1912, p. 30.

³ *Smith College Studies*, III, p. 208.

⁴ *Oeuvres*, ed. Matzke, p. lxvi.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 1 ff.

Kar Nature ki tut veint
 La comande e la destreint
 K'el deceive tute gent,
 E face ceo k'a lui apent.⁶

The sun and moon never stop changing, and surely Fortune cannot. Her riches are but worldly:

Ausi di des duns Fortune:
 Tuz ne valent une prune.

All true riches are God's. The moral is to seek virtue.⁷

The work of Simund de Freine represents an example of the influence of Boethius. Simund gives us the Christian compromise in the retention of both God and Fortune, which, as I have shown elsewhere, is hardly more than a logical development of the pagan remedy of spiritual devotion. The frequency with which this remedy occurs in literature suggests that Ecclesiastical influence is somewhat responsible for its persistence.

Fortune does not hold such an important place in the *chansons de gestes* and romantic literature as she does in the other fields. The pagan goddess is, however, mentioned in the following works of the latter part of the twelfth century: *Floire et Blanceflor*;⁸ *Athis et Porphirias*,⁹ and elsewhere in Alexandre de Bernai;¹⁰ *Le Donnie des Amants*,¹¹ Wace's *Roman de Brut*,¹² the *Lais* of Marie de France,¹³ and *L'Escoufle*¹⁴ (1210). These passages are not perfunctory or cumbersome; on the contrary they show a lively familiarity with what we should ordinarily expect to be a Classical and thus a learned figure. A knowledge of the goddess

⁶ Lines 331-4. "Nature" here does not seem to mean God, but rather a personification of Fortune's nature in this case. That is, the passage means, "It is her nature to deceive."

⁷ Lines 336 ff., 863 ff., 1250 ff.

⁸ Page 92, l. 2240; p. 124, l. 2966.

⁹ *Athis und Prophilias*, l. 1961.

¹⁰ *Romans d'Alixandre*, ed. Michelant, p. 522, ll. 2-3; p. 540, l. 33.

¹¹ Ed. G. Paris, p. 505, ll. 277 ff.

¹² Lines 1965 ff. (King Lear's complaint), l. 3965.

¹³ Warnke's ed., *Guigemar*, ll. 538 ff.

¹⁴ Page 105, ll. 3510 ff.; p. 133, ll. 4466 ff.; p. 135, ll. 4536-7; p. 153, ll. 5160 ff.; pp. 234-5, ll. 7824 ff.

is taken for granted. For example, one feels a genuine spirit of life in the complaint of *L'Escoufle*:

Hé, Dix! com iert sempres grans deus
De ce que Fortune a envie
De lor bon siecle et de lor vie
Qu'ele velt changier en tristor!¹⁵

To look farther afield, in the *Dit de l'Empereur Coustant* of the twelfth century we find the speaker sitting by the chimney and thinking on Fortuna's work:

As oeuvres Fortune pensis,
Comment li plus poissant del mont,
Qui par leur droit anciestre amont,

and so on.¹⁶ Benoit de Sainte-Maure observes the activities of Fortuna on several occasions in the *Roman de Troie* (c.1160). Ulysses, for example, has been led in his wanderings by the goddess.¹⁷ Chrestien de Troyes of the same period gives us a new method of dealing with the goddess, which is like the Christian compromise but which more nearly approaches the Christian Fortuna than anything which has preceded:

Lasse, fet ele, a si grant joie
M'avoit Deus mise et essauciee:
Or m'a an po d'ore abeissiee.
Fortune, qui m'avoit atreite,
Tost a a li sa main reteite.¹⁸

Here Fortune seems to symbolize a special function of "God."¹⁹ Chrestien keeps Fortuna in mind and she appears elsewhere in his work.²⁰

The *Roman du Renart* (of the twelfth century) offers a similar example of this curious treatment begun in Chrestien. The passage describes the wheel of Fortune which is pictured at the end of the Renart manuscript:—

¹⁵ Page 133, ll. 4466-9.

¹⁶ Ed. Wesselofsky, in *Romania*, VI, p. 162, ll. 20 ff.

¹⁷ Vol. IV, l. 28929 (cf. Dictys, *Belli Troiani*, lib. VI, § v, "adpulsusque ad Lotophagos," etc.) Other references: I, 3282, 4165; II, 10175, 13096; IV, 24496, 25215 ff. (a long complaint), 27456, 28412, 28615, 29050.

¹⁸ *Erec und Enide*, ll. 2782-6.

¹⁹ Cf. *Grant Mal fist Adam*, ed. Suchier, p. 62, stanzas 123, 124.

²⁰ *Roman du Chevalier de la Charrette*, p. 174; *Erec*, l. 4802. See also the *Perceval le Gallois*, II, 201, l. 6024, and I, 80 (prose).

Montés est, Dieus penst del abatre;
 Sen monter ne viut nus debatre,
 Ains est coronés coume uns rois.
 Fauser fait jugemens et lois,
 Fortune a se ruée escotée
 Si que mais n'ert par li tornée.
 Jamais n'en ert Renart mis jus,
 Se Dieus nel' fait ki maint lassus.²¹

People who have risen by fraud:

Tel gent sont au monde conté
 K'il sont en le roe monté:
 Por coi en faint-on mention?
 C'est roe de dampnation;
 Tous tans en couvient trebucier,
 Et fait le lasse ame embuscier
 Où ele n'a pais ne repos.²²

The moral is emphasized:

Tout adès fermement s'i tient
 Ki aime Diu et carité,
 Et a de son proisme pitié:
 Car qui sagement s'i avise,
 Cele roe que on devise,
 N'est sans plus que cis morteus mondes.

* * * * *

Or prions le Roy Jhesu-Crist
 Qui pour nous char humaine prist,
 Que de tel roe nous destourgne.²³

If French poetry had gone no further than this, however, the conception would be hardly more than the annihilation of Fortune and her wheel, as in St. Augustine's "wheel of Providence." Certainly thus far the figure is not much more original than Boccaccio's weak reflection (in the *De Casibus*) of Dante's Fortuna.

Allegory is less likely to raise the philosophical problem of Fortuna if it is concerned with secular matters, such as the court of love. In Thibaut's *Romanz de la Poire*, the pagan Fortuna is

²¹ *Renart le Nouvel* (Roman, ed. Méon, IV, 457-8), ll. 8005-12, etc.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 459, note, ll. 13-19.

²³ *Ibid.*, ll. 26-31, 77-9.

closely related to Amor, and performs offices for him although she is clearly superior.²⁴

LE ROMAN DE LA ROSE

The influence of the *Roman de la Rose* has had sufficient recognition. The interplay of relations between this French allegory and Italian allegory in general is far too complex for us to consider here.²⁵ We need merely to remember that the French conception of Fortune was not an isolated growth; that at any time suggestions could be received from the Italian, and in turn the Italian conception could borrow incidental detail from the French. Whatever its sources, *Le Roman de la Rose* contains a great mass of material on Fortune, which was thus newly offered to the popular imagination.

The first part of the poem, written by Guillaume de Lorris about 1225-30, gives far less space to the description of Fortune than the second part, written by Jean de Meun about 1270; but the former writer uses the purer allegory, and with him the goddess remains a goddess. In the first part, the lover is disappointed in Bel-Acueil:

Ce est ausinc cum de fortune
Qui met où cuer des gens rancune.²⁶

The passages picturing Fortune use little more than traditional material.²⁷ We may note the appearance merely as part of the general treatment of Fortune in the *Roman de la Rose*, which is the most conspicuous passage in French for the Fortune of love. She is here adequately and unobtrusively portrayed.

Jean de Meun introduces a long dissertation on Fortune, in which Reason discusses her work and accepts her existence as obvious:

There are strange tales about her,—
Et si la trueve-l'en escripte,
Que miex vaut assés et profite

²⁴ See ll. 25 ff. Post (*Mediaeval Spanish Allegory*, p. 165) says that she is depicted in the *Romanz* "as the protectress of the righteous and the benefactress of faithful lovers."

²⁵ See Benedetto's *Il "Roman de la Rose" e la Lett. Ital.*, which discusses the influence on Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio, Cecco d'Ascoli, Fazio degli Uberti, Frezzi, Fregoso, and others.

²⁶ Lines 3990-91.

²⁷ See ll. 3991 ff.

Fortune perverse et contraire
Que la mole et la debonnaire.²⁸

Good Fortune deceives and fools.²⁹ She seems to be loyal; she gives her promises of worldly felicity. Mounted on her wheel, men think they shall never fall. They think they have many friends, but when they lose their wealth, they learn their true friends. When she dwells with men, she troubles their minds; she nourishes them in ignorance. When they fall, she gives them vinegar. Only our true friends remain with us under those circumstances.³⁰ She has power over nothing really good. All good things are enclosed in one's self. Fortune has control over the rest of the gifts of this world, and takes and gives them at her caprice, whereby she makes fools smile and grieve.

Nus sages hons ne priserait,
Ne nel' feroit lié ne dolent
Le tor de sa roë volent.³¹

Do not prize the wheel a prune. Be like Socrates, who was never glad in prosperity nor sad in adversity.³² Strive with fortune and you can subdue her.³³

Much of the doctrine in this passage is obviously indebted to Boethius,³⁴ but it is put in a way to appeal to a class of readers rather different from that which would consult the philosopher.

Jean de Meun gathers more material by taking the description of Fortune's house bodily from Alanus de Insulis.³⁵ The confusion there between type and symbol, which I have already explained,³⁶ appears again in Jean de Meun's somewhat amplified passage. Fortune comes to the wretched part of the house:

Lors va soupant et jus se boute,
Ausinc cum s'el ne véist goute;
Et quant illec se voit chéuë,
Sa chiere et son habit remuë,
Et si se desnue et desrobe,
* * * * *
Et quant el voit la meschéance,

²⁸ Lines 4858-61.

²⁹ Cf. Petrarch, *De Remediis*, (*Smith College Studies in Modern Languages*, III, p. 207.)

³⁰ Lines 4852 ff.

³¹ Lines 5356 ff. Cf. Petrarch.

³² Lines 5868 ff.

³³ Lines 5900 ff.

³⁴ Jean de Meun translated the *Consolation of Philosophy*.

³⁵ See Langlois, *Origines et Sources du Roman de la Rose*, pp. 96, 186.

³⁶ See *Smith College Studies in Modern Languages*, III, pp. 189 ff.

Si quiert honteuse chevissance,
 Et s'en vait au bordiau cropir
 Plaine de duel et de sopir.
 Là plore à lermes espanduës,
 Les granz honors qu'ele a perduës,
 Et les délis où ele estoit
 Quant des granz robes se vestoit.³⁷

Jean returns to the purely symbolic idea later :

Et por ce qu'ele est si perverse,
 Que les bons en la boë verse, etc.³⁸

The point for us is that Fortune, as a goddess, could not weep except in extravagant sympathy. And, if she is the cause, why need she be sympathetic?³⁹

Jean de Meun's Fortune, although she wavers between type and symbol, is nevertheless consistently pagan as long as she is symbolic. The author offers the remedy of spiritual devotion, and in this connection he even corrects Alanus de Insulis on the subject of nobility ("gentillesce") :

Que Fortune à nul ne la baille,
 Comment qu'il aut du retolir,
 S'il ne scet si son cuer polir,
 Qu'il soit cortois, preus et vaillans.⁴⁰

So much for the actual picture of the goddess in Jean de Meun. Philosophically he is not so specific, or any more satisfactory. In a discussion of Divine providence and free-will, he decides that man must have free-will and that God's foresight does not imply "necessity."⁴¹ This gives him an opportunity to justify the existence of Fortuna as the goddess who keeps things in a

³⁷ Lines 6168 ff. Cf. lines 6178 ff. with Juvenal (Satira X, ll. 363 ff.)

³⁸ Lines 61889.

³⁹ Cf. that remarkable song of Fortuna, "Once in the gloaming Fortune met me here," which was drawn to my attention by Professor Archer Taylor :

I saw my Fortune midst the sounding sea
 Sit weeping on a rocky height and steep, etc. (st. iii).

The poem is printed in *Essays in the Study of Folk-Songs*, by Countess Martinengo-Cesaresco, London, 1886, pp. 297-8 (or Dent ed., pp. 229-30).

⁴⁰ Lines 6595-8. Yet see l. 6591, "gentillesce sa fille."

⁴¹ Lines 17302 ff.

state of flux for man's free-will to operate, but on this point he is vague. He takes over the Boethian conception of a fickle Fate:

Ainsinc otroi-ge destinée,
Que ce soit disposicion
Sous la prédestinacion
Ajoustée as choses movables.
Selonc ce qu'el sunt enclinables.⁴³

Later he apparently substitutes Fortune for this Fate:

Ainsinc puet estre homs fortunés
Por estre dès lors qu'il fu nés,
Preus et hardis en ses affaires,
* * * * *
Ou par fortune avoir perverse.⁴⁴

This is about as much of the Christian Fortune as we find in Boethius, and this is what Jean de Meun leaves us.⁴⁴ He says:

Et vois que Diex est tous poissans.⁴⁵

The tradition, then, which Jean offers to his successors includes not so much a novelty in his own material as a richness of harvest from other fields. He repopularizes in the French language the two great sources, Alanus and Boethius, and he does it in a way convenient both for the pagan and for the Christian. This service is merely one of the many encyclopædic aspects of his work.⁴⁶

⁴³ Lines 17739-43.

⁴⁴ Lines 17744-50.

⁴⁵ For the influence of Boethius, which is of course marked in the philosophical discussion and the description too, see Langlois, *Origines*, etc., pp. 136-8, 185-6; Galpin, *Mod. Lang. Assoc., Publ.*, XXIV, pp. 337 ff. See a reference to Boethius in lines 5052 ff. of the *Roman*, "Qui Boëce de Confort lisent," etc.

⁴⁶ Line 6331.

⁴⁷ Fortune also appears in Jean de Meun's *L'Art de Chevalerie*, and in its verse-form by Jean Priorat: see J. de M., pp. 129, 131, 175; J. P., p. 53, l. 1632 (not as in J. de M.), p. 353, l. 11233 (cf. J. de M., p. 175). See also line 652 of Jean de Meun's *Testament* (Méon's ed. of *Le Roman de la Rose*, IV, 33), "Se fortune vous a encroé sur as roë." Jean translated the letters of Abelard and Héloïse, see G. Paris, *Littérature Française au Moyen Age*, (1914,) p. 182. See also above, p. 7, n. 34. For fortune-telling, see Jean de Meun's *Le Plaisant Jeu du Dodechedron de Fortune*.

The minor poetry of the period gives up many lines to the description of the goddess, and shows a great variety of method in treatment. In Rutebeuf († c. 1280) she is mentioned casually.⁴⁷ Adam de la Halle brings a detailed picture of Fortune and her work into his *Jeu de la Feuillée* (c. 1262), with contemporary "hits" in the case of the people injured,—Ermenfrois de Paris, the two Crespins, Jakemon Louchart,⁴⁸ and others.

In the French poetry thus far we have noted the frequent use of the Christian compromise. Although, as I have said, this is merely an extension of a purely pagan idea, yet up to this point—in the work of Simund de Freine, in *L'Escoufle*, in the special treatment in Chrestien's work, and in the similar treatment in the *Roman du Renart* (where Fortune's labor becomes part of that of another Deity)—there has appeared a surprising tendency to employ this method quite deliberately.⁴⁹ Philippe de Remi, Sire de Beaumanoir, carries the treatment of Fortune a step further than the compromise.

PHILIPPE DE BEAUMANOIR

In *La Manekine*, Philippe de Beaumanoir (c. 1250-1296), pauses for a long discourse on Fortune, beginning with a complaint. The Manekine is distressed because no woman has ever suffered from Fortune as she has.⁵⁰ Fortune is an enemy of

⁴⁷ *Oeuvres*, II, 176, ll. 174 ff.

⁴⁸ Page 34, ll. 769 ff. For Adam's influence, see Guy's *Essai*, chapter vi of which discusses the relation of the *Jeu de la Feuillée* to *Midsummer Night's Dream*. L. Bahlsten (*Adam de la Halle's Dramen*, p. 46) notes that the characters on the wheel are from the history of the town of Arras.

⁴⁹ Cf. also Gautier de Coincy (1177-1236):

Que de Diu l'a tot destorné;
Tant l'a Fortune tost torné
Que il fist au déable oumage

(*Li Sessime est de Théophilus*, in Rutebeuf's *Oeuvres*, 1875, III, 246, ll. 9-11), where, however, the demon theory is brought forth. See also *La Roe de Fortune*, beginning,

Biaus sires Diex, que vaut, que vaut
La joie qui tost fine et faut

(Jubinal, *Jongleurs et Trouvères*, p. 177); again, Jubinal, *Contes, Dits*, etc., I, 128; *Girart de Rossillon*, ll. 13078.

⁵⁰ *Oeuvres*, ed. Suchier, I, 36, ll. 1084 ff.

good people.⁵¹ She shows her power, and continually turns her wheel, on which all the world is set. He is a fool who trusts the wheel. God put the present sufferer in a higher place than ever before, and then came her fall:

Car fortune a son vouloir maine
Les gens, puis que Dix li consente.⁵²

But Fortune is not the less capricious.⁵³

These very striking passages do not include all that Philippe has to say concerning Fortune,⁵⁴ but they do disclose his position. God consents to Fortune's rule of the world, according to Philippe. Thus we see that Fortuna must be dominated by the Christian God, and in some way works His will.

PIERRE DE LA BROCHE

A dialogue between Fortune and one Pierre de la Broche,⁵⁵ in the presence of Reason, uses a plot reminiscent of Boethius. There is, however, the important contrast that here Fortune is actually seen doing the will of God and punishing the wicked man according to his deserts:

Pierre accuses Fortune of having sold wealth and honor to him too dearly. Reason calls on Fortune to defend herself. She responds by accusing Pierre of having abused her gifts, and of having vilified royalty. Reason thereupon pronounces the sentence that Pierre must suffer still

⁵¹ Lines 3325-6.

⁵² Lines 4636-4705 *passim*.

⁵³ See the prose version of the *Manekine* by Jean Wauquelin (written 1446-48; see Beaumanoir, I, xcii), ch. ii: "Fortune, la mere de tritresse et de consolation, n'espargne grant ne petit. Car a tous elle donne selonc ce qui lui plaist, c'est assavoir a l'un prosperité et a l'autre adversité," (Beaumanoir, I, 268).

⁵⁴ See I, 170 (*La Manekine*, ll. 5496 ff.); II, 20, 52, 56, 79 (*Jehan et Blonde*, ll. 549, 1629, 1743, 2509).

⁵⁵ Pierre, a barber of St. Louis and a favorite of his son and successor, was accused of calumny of the queen, Marie of Brabant, and was hanged in 1276 (see Monmerqué and Michel, *Théâtre Français*, p. 208). Whether he was the author of this dramatic dialogue, I do not know. Perhaps it was written by way of apology, but it reads more like the work of a skillful interpreter of the scene.

more. Fortune says that she has done Pierre many a favor, but he has been guilty of infidelity:

Se droiz en a pris la venjance
Et ta fausseté t'a repris,
Por quoi m'en fez noise ne tance?

Pierre answers:

Hé! Fortune fausse et vilaine,
Vessiaus plains de mal et d'amer,
Escorpie de venin plaine.

Why didn't you keep me fixed on high? There is no greater sorrow than falling into grief and distress from a position of wealth. You are a scorpion; you seem to love, and end by poisoning.

You used to be good, replies Fortune; you set yourself to serving God and the whole world, and He rewarded you;

Lors te pris en humilité
Ou commandement Dieu le pere,
Et te fis par grant amisté
Ta meson sus ma roe fere.

He declares that she is his mortal enemy, and she (with something of the calm of the blessed figure in Dante) replies: It is my delight to turn my wheel; you have ruined yourself, Pierre. And Reason agrees.⁵⁶

WATRIQUET DE COUVIN

In both Italian and French poetry there has appeared a more or less successful attempt to create a new figure of Ventura equivalent to Fortuna, although I have not drawn attention to it. Thus, in Brunetto Latini we find:

Ch' amico di ventura
Come rota si gira,
Che mi pur guarda, e mira
Come ventura corre.⁵⁷

In some of the distichs of Cato translated by Elie de Wincestre (of the middle of the twelfth century), Adventure, like Fortune, is confused with Occasio.⁵⁸ Everart (of about the same period)

⁵⁶ Monmerqué and Michel, *Théâtre Français*, pp. 208 ff.

⁵⁷ *Il Favoleto*, ll. 72-5. Cf. also Bonaggiunta da Lucca, in *Poeti del Primo Secolo*, I, 513 (juxtaposition of Fortuna and Ventura), 515; Lorenzo de' Medici, *Poesie*, p. 169 ("questa è ruota di ventura").

⁵⁸ *Ausgab. und Abhand.*, XLVII, 128, ll. 429, 439 ff.

substitutes Fortuna for Aventure in the translation of the same distichs.⁵⁹ Simund de Freine says:

Fortune ceo est aventure
Ki vient e vet e poi dure.⁶⁰

From this passage, it seems possible that Fortune was felt to be too much of a proper name to be self-explanatory; Ventura or Aventure was merely "Chance,"⁶¹ and could be used to interpret "Fortuna."

In the line of this tradition, Watriquet de Couvin (fl. 1319-1329) developed a remarkable figure. His use of the name Aventure may be due to his strong impression of the haphazard element in human life and his desire to emphasize the fact that he has strictly the goddess of chance in mind. In *Li Mireoirs as Dames*, as he is riding along he meets

La très plus belle creature
C'onques peüst fourmer Nature,
Et la plus blanche au droit costé;
Rien n'en avoit Nature osté,
Toute y estoit biautez entière.
Mais tant estoit hideuse et fiere,
Laide, noire, au costé senestre,
C'on en peüst esbahis estre;

* * * * *

Ses vestemens n'iert pas entiers,
Mais de parçon mout très diverse:
Noire iert à l'esclen lez et perse,
Blanche au destre con fleurs de lis, etc.

She salutes him, puts her right arm about his neck, welcomes him, and bids him not to wonder at her:

Je porte au siecle double vois,
J'ai bien et mal dedens ma male.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 129, ll. 99 d, 102.

⁶⁰ *Roman de Philosophie*, l. 61.

⁶¹ See also Jubinal, *Contes, Dits*, etc., I, 195 ff:

L'Escripture dit bien, Fortune est aventure
A la foiz bone et bele, à la foiz laide et dure.

Also Baudouin de Condé, *Li Prisons d'Amours* (*Dits et Contes*, I, 301-2), ll. 967-8:

Fortune et aventure sunt
Une coze, mais .ij. nons ont.

See also lines 970 ff.

She has heard him lament for the royal beauties. She will lead him to see the beauty of the true mirror. He wonders at her great power:

Fortune et Eürs en ont tant
Que chascuns s'en puet merveillier:
Cil que on voit plus travailler
De Dieu servir et de bien faire,
Sont cil qui plus truevent contraire.

* * * * *

Ce nous tesmoignent cler et lai.

Here we have a note of the philosophical tradition. Then Fortune undertakes to tell him "la vérité pure":

Frère, on m'apele Aventure,
En terre m'a Diex estableie;
Au main lever pas ne m'oublie,
Tantost sui où je veil aler;
Je fas le trop haut devaler,
Nus n'a en moi juste fiance.
Bien en vois la senefiance
A mon cors de double figure,
Qu 'en moi n'a point d'uevre seüre.
Nus n'i do it estr asseürez,
Tant soit riches ne eürez
Ne par fortune aventureus.

They go to the Castle of Beauty. The steps to the summit are in charge of Nature, Sapience, Raison, Mesure, etc. Raison is stewardess of the Castle.⁶²

Watriquet's interest in Aventure, or Fortune, does not end here. He has *Uns Dis de Fortune*, which does not reveal, but is quite consistent with, the Christian conception. The Christian Fortune punishes sin in general, and here pride suffers. Fortune's goods are worldly possessions.⁶³ In another place Watriquet describes Fortune's house,⁶⁴ and he mentions the goddess herself many times,⁶⁵ usually giving us the Christian Figure. With him Fortune is always the servant of God.

⁶² *Dits*, ed. Scheler (who dates nearly half the pieces between 1319 and 1329, see intro., pp. xii ff.), pp. 1 ff. For the date of *Li Mireoirs*, 1324, see note on p. 411.

⁶³ *Dits*, p. 73, ll. 4 ff.

⁶⁴ Pages 399 ff. (*Li Dis de l'Escharbote*).

⁶⁵ Page 214, ll. 498 ff.; p. 247, ll. 487 ff.; p. 270, ll. 1247 ff.; p. 398, ll. 48 ff.

. . . Diex, em poi d'eure d'esforce,
 Leur force a tost au bas tornée
 Par fortune, la bestornée.⁶⁶

And his prayer is:

Ha Diex! con dure voie ala,
 Où à tel duel couvient aler;
 Tost l'ot fait Fortune avaler.
 Et Diex, qui tout fait et loing garde,
 De telle avalée nous garde.⁶⁷

There can be no doubt about this figure. The Christian conception is certainly what we have in Philippe de Beaumanoir, Pierre de la Broche,⁶⁸ and Watrquet de Couvin, approached from a different point of view, treated very originally, all three really before the end of Dante's life and with no apparent reminiscence of Dante. In Watrquet de Couvin, where we find the most complex elaboration, even the name of the goddess is different from that of the figure in Dante; and yet we may feel sure that Aventure here represents Fortuna. Indeed, the growth shows every indication of being spontaneous and natural.

II

BAUDOUIN DE CONDÉ

The place of Fortuna in love-allegory was assured both by the treatment of Fortuna in connection with love in literature previous to that of Baudouin de Condé (fl. 1245-1275), and by the dignity given to her in the *Roman de la Rose*. As the Italian *novelle* were principally concerned with love,⁶⁹ and gave considerable attention to the activities of Fortuna, so French allegory took up the themes of Jean de Meun and developed them after Jean's great model.

Baudouin de Condé's *Prisons d'Amours* gives a detailed account of the tower on the top of love's prison. There in the tower

⁶⁶ Page 261, ll. 966-8; see also p. 228, ll. 936 ff.

⁶⁷ Page 82, ll. 132-6.

⁶⁸ See above, p. II, note 55.

⁶⁹ Not so Italian allegory, for the tradition of Dante was not important for the Court of Love. Cf. W. A. Neilson, *Origins and Sources of the Court of Love*, Boston, 1899, p. 109.

Fortune is in control of affairs and turns her wheel.⁷⁰ The peculiar variation of the theme and the treatment of the wheel I shall study elsewhere in a discussion of the wheel. Here we may note that it is really a wheel of love:

Illueques cil et celles sunt
 Qui les solas d'amours grans ont;
 Li autres rais si aval baisse,
 Ke jusk'en la cartre s'abaisse,
 Là ù cil sunt qui n'ont d'amours
 Fors les travaux et les dolours.
 Sour les autres .ij. rais moyens
 Sunt cil qui dedens les loiens
 Sunt d'amors, ne mais pour amer
 Ne sentent ne douc ne amer.⁷¹

NICOLE DE MARGIVAL

La Panthère d'Amours (c. 1295 ?) of Nicole de Margival sends the lover to seek his love (the panther) by way of Fortune. The road is fearsome, but he arrives at Fortune's house. Fortune, at first angry, puts him under the control of adversity; "Eurs," however, soon aids him, and Grace, who comes riding through the country, sends Bone Volonté to Fortune as a harbinger. Fortune is appeased. Pity with her daughter Mercy arrives, leading the gentle panther. The panther at the bidding of Pity submits, and the lover awakens.⁷²

LE ROMAN DE FAUVEL

The satiric *Roman de Fauvel* (1310-1314) introduces the Christian Fortuna in connection with the discussion of Church defects and difficulties. Fortune is responsible for the bad condition of the Church:

La seignorie temporel,
 Qui deüst estre basse lune,
 Est par la roe de Fortune
 Souveraine de sainte Eglise.⁷³

The protagonist visits the house of Fortune in the city of Macro-

⁷⁰ *Dits et Contes*, I, 267 ff., ll. 297 ff., 839 ff.

⁷¹ Lines 871-80.

⁷² Lines 1918 ff.

⁷³ Lines 472-5 of the edition published by the Société des Anciens Textes Français, from a xiv-century MS. See also lines 397 ff., 406-30, 1147.

cosm. The goddess holds in her hands two crowns, one beautiful, one ugly. She has two faces, and turns two wheels. At her feet is seated Vain Glory. Fortune says that she is in control of the world, but that she is not well known. She is the daughter

Du roy qui sans commencement
Regne et vit adurablement.

(Fortune Primigenia!) She has a sister Sapience. She was ordained by God to make the world revolve. When all movement stops the world will end. Fortune is only divine providence, and has four names: Providence, Destiny, Adventure, Fortuna. The world is old and soon will approach its end, when the Antichrist will arrive.⁷⁴

From this outline it appears that here is a confused union of the demonic conception, or the Fortune of the lower world (who has thus subdued the Church), and the Christian conception.

JEAN DE CONDÉ

The peculiar French version of the compromise, which sometimes becomes the actual Christian conception and yet does not resemble that of Dante, is found in *Li Dis de Fortune* by Jean de Condé (fl. 1310-1340):

Fortune is wonderfully and terribly dangerous. There is no sureness in her gifts. She often takes away more than she has given. When man abandons her, he is beaten down lower than ever before. She has no firm covenant. Reason often teaches us that whom God wishes to be safe He can keep on high:

C'est moult legier à soustenir
A homme qui a cunnoissance,
Quar retenue a sa poissance
Et sour Fortune et sour Nature
Et sour chascune creature.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, ll. 1850 ff. Pages iii-x contain a full outline of the poem, followed by a description of the twelve MSS. and by discussions as to date (1310-1314), authorship, etc. A photographic reproduction of the *Roman*, from another xiv-century MS. (no. 146, Bibliothèque Nationale, without numbered lines) was published in 1907; and the first part of the poem is printed, from a xv-century MS., in *Jahrbuch für Roman- und Eng. Lit.*, VII. 316-343, 437-446.

Let people remain silent about the works of Fortune:

Quar riens ne consent sans raison
 Diex, qui tout de noient créa
 Et de toute oeuvre à son gré a
 Establi au siecle l'ouvrier;
 Dont n'i sai autre recouvrer
 De l'oeuvre du tout bestournée,
 C'on en face à Dieu retournée.

Men who have suffered ought to fear God and love Him until He takes them back to His grace. His power exceeds all other. And you who are exalted, beware lest Fortune make you fall again!

Aies donc le cuer apresté
 De douter Dieu, ton creatour,
 Car Fortune ne porroit tour
 Tourner sanz son consentement.

God may let the wicked hold their prosperity for a while, hoping for penitence, but later their souls will be snatched to hell.⁷⁵

This treatment, while it has a peculiar suggestion of the Boethian doctrine,⁷⁶ goes farther than that. God causes the reversals of Fortune to make mankind come back to Him. Jean de Condé gives Fortune a place in his poetry several times elsewhere,⁷⁷ but this is the chief passage which reveals his philosophy.

This, however, is not the last of the Christian figure in French literature, or the last of the passages reminiscent of Boethius. Gorra summarizes a discussion in an Old French manuscript, as follows:

The author is in prison and deep in melancholy. He sees, as if painted on the wall, a wheel moved by a lady of great age. She is crowned with gold, and wears a mantle. On the wheel are four human figures. She tells about herself. She and her sister, Reason, were created by God (when man and woman were first made) not of earthly but of celestial material. She is invisible and dwells on earth. She has a wise damsel as her companion, named Measure, and she is attended by a young girl named Habundance. God entrusted all the wealth of the world to them, of which there are two kinds: the wealth of Fortune, and that of Nature. The latter was entrusted to Fortune's sister.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Baudouin and Jean de Condé, *Dits et Contes*, III, 151 ff.

⁷⁶ Cf. *Cons. Philos.*, IV, met. vi and pr. vii.

⁷⁷ *Dits et Contes*, II, 188, 347, 360; III, 54, 127.

⁷⁸ Gorra, *Studi di Crit. Lett.*, pp. 57 ff. The MS. (no. 12460, Bibliothèque Nationale) is dated 1345.

Fortune and Reason, here at least, seem on the point of reconciliation.

LES ÉCHECS AMOUREUX

The *Échecs Amoureux*, of the late fourteenth century, tells the story of a man who loses a game of chess in love and blames Fortune for his loss.⁷⁹ The author seeks the God of Love for consolation. The account of Fortune presents the old material of Fortune's characteristics: Fortune has control only over the wicked, therefore let mankind follow virtue alone.⁸⁰ As I have shown elsewhere,⁸¹ the author borrows the figure of the wheel of Fate from Boethius (*Cons. Philos.*, IV, pr. vi), substituting Fortune for Fate. That this was an easy enough step is obvious from the number of Christian treatments which, as we have seen, are indebted to Boethius. Fate becomes "muable," and Fortune, the more familiar figure with a wheel, fits the place better to the Mediaeval imagination. One must

Passer les perils de ce monde,
Ou fortune regne et habonde,
Et soy de tout vice eslongier.⁸²

Boethius has once again stimulated the poetic imagination to the poetic idea of a figure like the Christian Fortune.⁸³

In the fifteenth-century commentary on this poem⁸⁴ I find an interesting revival of the scholastic discussion: "Et pour ce convient il confesser que fortune soit aucune chose reele et vraye et non pas chose du tout simplement fainte, et qu'elle soit aucunement aussi cause des choses qui ainsi adviennent fortunement."

⁷⁹ Of this poem, unfortunately, I have been able to examine only such fragments as are printed in Sieper's *Les Échecs Amoureux* (Weimar, 1898), and in the second volume (1903) of his edition of Lydgate's *Reson and Sensuallyte* (see a summary on pp. 59 ff.); in Mr. Galpin's letter, *Mod. Lang. Notes*, XXIX, pp. 62-3; and in Körting's *Altfranzoesische Uebersetzung der Remedia Amoris des Ovid*.

⁸⁰ Sieper's ed., pp. 52, 65, 84-5; Galpin, as above.

⁸¹ *Mod. Lang. Notes*, XXIX, p. 197.

⁸² See Mr. Galpin's letter, *ibid.*, 62-3.

⁸³ For the influence of Boethius, see Sieper's *Les Échecs Amoureux*, pp. 130, 142.

⁸⁴ Most of the MSS. of this commentary are of the fifteenth century: see Sieper's edition of Lydgate's *Reson and Sensuallyte*, II, 67.

Fortune does not bestow her gifts on beasts or on the insane. She has to do only with men of deliberate action, as, for example, when a man cultivates his vineyard and comes upon a buried treasure.⁸⁵

GUILLAUME DE GUILLEVILLE

In the *Pelerinage de l'Homme* (c. 1330) De Guilleville includes a long description of Fortune and her wheel.⁸⁶ She interrupts the Pilgrim's sea-voyage:

Or vous dy ie que ainsi nageant
Et les flotz de mer regardant
Ung grant arbre bienauant vy.

The tree proves to be a possession of Fortune. Soon the traveller finds himself on Fortune's wheel, which is whirling in the midst of the water, and an elaborate description of Fortune's symbolism is presented. Fortune's dignity in the universe is suggested later, when Astrology tells the pilgrim that Fortune receives the commission of her seasons and her duties from above:

Dire ie vueil et maintenir
Que fortune et son caribdis
Sa roe et trestout son tourneis
Et tout quanque peut et a peu
Du cours du ciel luy est venu
Et luy est certain temps donne
Et baille et pœo3donne
Pour faire fai3 infortune3
Du aucunesfoi3 fortune3.⁸⁷

Here De Guilleville clearly subordinates Fortune to the power of the heavens. Whether we are meant to understand by "cours du ciel" merely the stars and their revolutions, or whether De Guilleville intended a deeper significance, it is hard to tell positively in a period when intelligent men actually believed in planetary influence.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 72-3. See also (p. 73) "Fortune donc, a proprement parler, n'est aultre chose que ce qui nous esmeult a aucune oeuvre faire, a laquelle s'ensuyt aucun esfect inoppinable et ce n'est aultre chose que nostre volunté ou nostre entendement, auquel les philozophes finablement ramainent ceste . . . cause par accident."

⁸⁶ *Rommant des Trois Pelerinaiges* (c. 1500), fol. lxxij v°.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, fol. lxx v°.

A curious reminiscence of Boethius is found in *Le Regime de Fortune*,⁸⁸ which in the form of seven "balades" summarizes most of the familiar ideas about Fortune, including a description of her house. The author chides men for trusting in Fortune:—Foolish men! You really possess nothing but the gifts of Grace and Nature. The fruits of Nature should suffice. Fortune does no wrong, therefore, in taking back her gifts; it is her habit and her right. This is the rule of Fortune. Take heart. Who wants to enjoy the dance of Fortune, let him prize the small gifts as much as the great.

III

GUILLAUME DE MACHAUT

More promise of the spirit of the Renaissance in the acceptance of Fortune is found in the works of Guillaume de Machaut († 1377) than in those of any French author thus far studied. Guillaume continues the tradition of Petrarch in the Fortune of love, but without Petrarch's outspoken orthodoxy, and without much emphasis on his moral. The *Remede de Fortune* is concerned with bad fortune in an amour, and the remedy is really ultimate success. It is remarkably rich in detail, but the detail is chiefly drawn from predecessors:

The lover is afraid to declare his love. One of his poems falls into his lady's hands. She asks who the author is, and he, abashed, runs away without answering. He goes to the Park of Hesdin to complain:— Fortune controls love. She never stops turning her wheel; high becomes low, and low becomes high. The joyous becomes sad. She is not firm, stable, just, loyal, or true. When one thinks her charitable, she is avaricious, hard, strange, fearful, traitorous, and deceiving. What seems friendly and honey-sweet becomes the incurable sting of a viper. She would betray her own father. Fortune loves only from a distance. She always fails at need. She has regard for no person, good or bad. She would bear false witness to get the best friend she has in the world into a

⁸⁸ Alain Chartier, *Oeuvres* (1617), pp. 710-17. Piaget, *Martin le Franc*, p. 173, attributes the poem to Michault Taillevent († 1458), and in proof refers to the Bibliothèque Nationale's French MS., 1696, fol. 43 v°, and to the Arsenal MS. 3521, fol. 216 r°. Gröber also assigns it to Taillevent (*Grundriss*, II Bd., i Abt., 5 Lief., pp. 1126 ff.), and he relates to it the *Règne de Fortune* in Montaignon's *Recueil*, X, 75-84 (cf., however, Piaget as above, and in *Romania*, XVIII, 444). A note in Chartier's works says that the piece is not in the MS. which has been used for that edition.

corner. She flays rather than cuts; she abounds in malice. What she gives is not worth a rotten pear. She never ceases doing ill. When a person is most endowed with glory and worldly riches, she brings him to nothing. Her gifts cause only pain. She brings on the storm and tempest of adversity. She has more than a thousand tricks. She is hateful love, wretched happiness, avaricious bounty. With one eye she smiles, with the other she weeps. She has power over emperors, popes, and kings. Conquering them, she cries "Checkmate!"

Fortune and Love work together for the author's ill. But Esperence comes and speaks to him. Esperence reviews the qualities of Fortune: Use Reason to gain felicity. Remember that none of Fortune's goods is dependable. Hold her power base, for happiness comes from endurance and patience. Despise the changes of Fortune. Reason will prove that Fortune was never treasonable. She must change or she would not be Fortune. Her wheel cannot be stopped for you. If you put a boat on the sea, you know it will go as the wind takes it. So with Fortune. As a mother she fed you with her milk, and yet you now complain. Hasn't she done enough? You would see all this if Love had not made you blind. Prize not a prune the wealth of Fortune. Let a man follow Bonneürté rather, who gives Glory, Delight, etc.:

Qu' amy vray ne sont pas en compte
Des biens Fortune, qui bien compte,
Mais entre les biens de vertu.

* * * * *

Mais la bonne et bien enseigne
Que Raison gouverne et maistrie,
Qui tant scet, tant puet et tant vaut
Que riens de bien en li ne faut,
De sa bonté tant m'enrichist
Que ses dous yeus vers moy guenchist.

The lover tells his lady what Esperence counselled him, and the lady accepts him.⁸⁹

From this summary it is obvious that Guillaume de Machaut owes much to the pagan conception of Fortune in Boethius.⁹⁰ The other

⁸⁹ *Oeuvres*, ed. Hoepffner, II, 1 ff. The quotations are on pages 103, 125.

⁹⁰ On pages xvi ff. Hoepffner discusses preceding treatments; he notes that the one in this poem is different from that in the *Roman de la Rose*. On pages xix ff. he speaks of the relation to Boethius and compares Esperence to Philosophy (cf. Alain Chartier's *L'Esperance, ou Consolation des Trois Vertus*, in *Oeuvres*, pp. 261-390). Hoepffner (p. xxx) says that evidently Guillaume did not know the work of Simund de Freine.

passages in which he treats of the goddess are not meagre; they are chiefly concerned with erotic motifs."⁹¹

JEAN FROISSART

The Fortune of Love appears again in the poetry of Froissart (1337 ?-1410 ?), who does not differ much in the manner of his treatment from Guillaume de Machaut. He is chiefly concerned with affairs of love, but at least twice he steps aside to confront the problem of Fortune itself. Here, as in Machaut, the pagan figure from Boethius is employed:

Ne fu Boece par Envie
 Au grant peril d'estre desers,
 Quant ou meilleur point de sa vie
 Ot par Fortune un tel revers, etc.

His remedy is found in his rejection of Fortune's gifts:

Qu'il disoit: "Hé! je te deffie,
 Faulse Fortune, et tes divers
 Estas."

Encor dist il et ratifie
 Que trop est à Fortune sers
 Cil qui en elle se confie

* * * * *

Car telle richesse desvoie
 Parfaite consolacion.

⁹¹ In Hoepffner's edition, see *Jugement dou Roy de Behaingne*, ll. 284, 684 ff., 725, 821; *Jugement dou Roy de Navarre*, ll. 1294, 2258, 3851 ff.; *Dit de l'Alerion*, ll. 432, 1749, 2282 ff., 2500 ff. In the *Poésies Lyriques*, ed. Chichmaref, see I, 52, 63, 71, 81, 87, 113, 150, 170, 171, 176, 182, 192, 204, 209, 216, 229, 230, 254; II, 312, 355, 357, 371, 415, 416, 418, 419, 434, 435, 446, 476, 477, 479, 480, 488, 497-8, 506, 510, 556, 557, 638, 644; in *Le Livre du Voir-Dit*, pp. 26, 67, 77, 90, 258, 264, 277, 278, 309, 332, 333-5, 336, 337, 338, 352 ff., 367. By far the majority of these references relate Fortune to love, and they continue to emphasize the opinion that Fortune deals with worldly goods. In the *Voir-Dit*, pp. 333-5, there is an interesting reference to the Classics. Note the compromise in the following lines (Chichmaref I, 230):

Et se magique m'asseüre
 Ou astronomie est pour moy,
 Et Fortune estre me vuet dure,
 Asseürer pas ne me doy.

Dont qui vuet honneur et pris,
 Ait sa fiance en Dieu de paradis
 Et pense adès qu'il ha sept contre quarte,
 S'il ha pooir de leur orgueil abatre.

He never would gain comfort from Fortune; so he changed his allegiance to the banner of Science. The happy man does not come to good by Fortune, for she takes all his wealth away. Sens and Science are poorer, but more dependable. Worldly glory passes away, and indeed everything except Sens.⁹²

This is the remedy of prudence and spiritual devotion.⁹³

Merely pagan endurance is the remedy Froissart offers in his "balade" on the subject:

Se Fortune la tres fausse et perverse
Est contre moy,

I will continue to think on the truth that many a man has wished to turn back from an undertaking. Times are not dependable. Fortune does what she wants. She makes one mount on high, and in a little while she revolves one down again. So she hastily turns her wheel. If she were a thousand times more changeful, I would still endure her power.⁹⁴

The interest Froissart takes in Fortune is, like that of Machaut, surprisingly great.⁹⁵

EUSTACHE DESCHAMPS

Deschamps (c. 1345—c. 1405), a disciple of Guillaume de Machaut,⁹⁶ takes unusual pleasure, even for a maker of balades, in depicting Fortune. In his balade "A Guillaume de Machaut sur le Voir Dit," he asserts,

Si adresçay au lieu premierement
Ou Fortune parla si durement,
Comment l'un joint a ses biens, l'autre estrange.⁹⁷

He wrote a balade, "Discussion avec la Fortune," with the refrain,

Mere de tous suy nommée Fortune.⁹⁸

⁹² *Oeuvres, Poésies*, ed. Scheler, III, 216 ff. (*Trésor Amoureux*, balades vii-xii, xiv). Cf. the morality *Everyman*.

⁹³ See § xii, l. 25, reference to Reason. The great example here is Socrates (see § viii).

⁹⁴ *Méliador*, II, 238-9.

⁹⁵ For other references in Froissart, see Scheler's ed., I, 84, 141, 142, 146, 147, 177, 217, 304, 306, 307, 311; II, 18, 21, 22, 84, 90, 109-11, 257, 258, 265-6, 267-8, 269, 271, 387, 406, 414; III, 213-14; *Méliador*, III, 176.

⁹⁶ See Hoepffner's edition of Machaut, I, p. v.

⁹⁷ *Oeuvres*, I, 249, (cxxxvii).

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, VI, 56-8 (mcxxxiv).

In this poem Fortune merely claims her right to give to whom she pleases. Deschamps also wrote a balade of three stanzas, beginning,

En Boece, de consolacion,
Trouverez-vous de Fortune l'assault.

This balade tells us Fortune's resources,—

Elle a de droit en sa possession
Richesce, honeurs, dignitez ne lui fault;

and the refrain is,

En tous temps est Fortune decevable.

Here he gives a remedy reminiscent of *Les Échecs Amoureux*:

Despitez la, aiez cuer de vassault,
Ja ne croiez qu'elle soit veritable,
Fuiez ses biens, car se Dieux me consault,
En tous temps, etc.⁹⁹

The pagan figure of the goddess is taken from Boethius, and, for the present, Fortune is again annihilated. Deschamps's remedy elsewhere is usually that of fortitude¹⁰⁰ or that of prudence.¹⁰¹ In general the poet keeps Fortune pagan, and he retains her in many places throughout his works in a great variety of connections.¹⁰²

The poets I have treated in this section of my study of French literature have been chiefly interested in the Fortune of love. Only Eustache Deschamps seems really bothered about the philosophical or Christian aspects of the problem, and he treats them

⁹⁹ I, 316 f. (clxxxi). Cf. the mention of God and Fortune, V, 75 (dcccclxxxix); the annihilation theory, II, 42 (ccxvii); the remedy of spiritual devotion, where Franche Volonté, given by God, hinders Fortune, II, 140 (cclxxxvi), and see all of pp. 140-42.

¹⁰⁰ IX, 358-9 (*Le Miroir de Mariage*, 11148 ff.). Cf. V, 411 (mxcviii).

¹⁰¹ IV, 183 f. (dcccxvii); better, I, 213 (cii), "Du bien n'esjouit, ne du mal ne se plaigne."

¹⁰² Friend in need: I, 289 ff.; IX, 1 ff.; X, p. xxii, no. xv (pièces attrib.). War: I, 162; V, 371; VII, 138. Love: I, 132 ff.; III, 371, 386 ff.; IV, 5, 178; V, 342; X, p. lxxxvii (pièces attrib.). Court: I, 237; V, 289; VI, 171, 260. For references in general, see also I, 241; II, 124, 286; III, 132, 134; IV, 238, 332; V, 209, 354; VI, 9, 71, 101, 223; VII, 56; X, pp. xxii ff., xliv, lviii, lxxxv (pièces attrib.).

in a more or less casual way. Otherwise the pagan goddess holds complete sway; her power is checked only by the pagan remedies.

IV

The Renaissance did not begin in France so early as in Italy. Therefore we can hardly expect many signs of its approach in the fifteenth century. In the attitude of the poets of love which we have just been considering, I think there is much to be found prophetic of the Renaissance spirit. This section of my study will be concerned with French poets of a slightly later group.

CHRISTINE DE PISAN

Christine de Pisan (1363-c. 1431), in spite of her moral warning against reading the *Roman de la Rose*,¹⁰³ continues in general the pagan tradition of Fortune handed down from the *Roman* and from Boethius's *Consolatio*, which Jean de Meun translated.¹⁰⁴ To be sure, in *Le Livre de la Mutacion de Fortune*, the portrayal of the house of Fortune seems original, but the goddess remains pagan:

Christine is put in the service of Fortune by her mother. Fortune sends her on a journey to the court of the God Hymeneus and she is entrusted to the protection of a knightly youth. She spends seven years there and is married. She travels away in a boat, and at sea her husband is lost. When Christine complains, Fortune appears and changes her to a man. The ship, wrecked by the storm at sea, is mended, and the journey to the castle of Fortune is begun. An elaborate description of the castle follows, and a treatise on Fortune's work in the history of mankind.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ *Oeuvres*, III, 39 (lxxvii). Cf. her *Espistres sur le Roman de la Rose*, ed. F. Beck, Neuburg, 1888, pp. 20 ff.: "Le dit inutile rommant de la rose . . . (et de tant est le peril plus grant comme le bien y est plus autentique comme autre fois ay dit)." This was, of course, written in connection with the controversy on the character of woman, aroused by the unflattering comments in the *Roman*. See Neilson, *Court of Love*, pp. 83 ff.

¹⁰⁴ For reference to Boethius in Christine's poetry, see *Oeuvres*, I, 97; II, 297; *Le Livre du Chemin de Long Estude*, II, 206 ff., 278 ff.

¹⁰⁵ I have not been able to see the actual book. For the summary I have used, see Koch's *Christine de Pisan*, pp. 63 ff., which dates the poem 1403. Piaget (*Martin le Franc*, p. 172) says that the book "N'est rien moins qu'un essai d'histoire universelle, depuis les temps les plus reculés." The nations treated of are Greece, Troy, Rome, Assyria, the Medes, Persians, and Amazons.

Christine's remedy for Fortune is taken from Boethius:

De commun cours chascun a trop plus chiers
De Fortune les biens, que de Nature;
Mois c'est a tort, car ilz sont si legiers
Qu'on n'en devoit a nul fuer avoir cure.

Boëce en fait mension
En son livre de Consolacion,
Qui repreuve de Fortune la gloire.

One can see in history the examples of Fortune's exaltation of man and his sudden fall. One must be forewarned and have fear of her.¹⁰⁶

Thus we learn that there are better gifts than those of Fortune, and that there is another important Deity.¹⁰⁷ There are many treatments of Fortune scattered throughout Christine's work.¹⁰⁸

CHARLES D'ORLEANS

In the poetry of Charles d'Orleans (1391-1465) we have an exception to the rule that the poets of lighter love-poetry in France and Italy use the pagan Fortune. He has two series of balades on the subject of the goddess. In one of these he employs the Christian conception, with a peculiarly querulous and yet theoretically consistent discussion:

FORTUNE: Why do they give me the reputation of being untrustworthy

¹⁰⁶ *Oeuvres*, I, 97 (*Cent Balades*, xcvi).

¹⁰⁷ See references to God and Fortune, *ibid.*, II, 144 (*Le Livre des Trois Jugemens*, ll. 1086 ff.),

Dieux qui fist ciel et lune
Vous reconfort et moy qui par Fortune
Suis mise au bas
Doint brief finer;

also I, 19 (balade xviii); II, 218 (*Livre du Dit de Poissy*, ll. 1965-71).

See, too, III, 28 (*Les Enseignemens Moraux*),

Que prudence puisse acquerre,
Car celle est des vertus la mere
Qui chace Fortune l'amere;

also III, 41; and *Livre du Chemin*, ll. 235 ff.

¹⁰⁸ See *Oeuvres*, I, 4, 8, 9, 11, 13, 25, 34, 104, 115, 150, 182, 208, 214, 223, 224, 245, 266-7, 268; II, 8, 64, 93, 135, 144, 198, 199, 202, 203, 300; III, 28, 29, 34, 36, 41, 159, 304; *Livre du Chemin*, ll. 110, 149, 255 ff., 271, 319-20.

because I exalt the lowly, and humble those who are on high? I am wrongfully blamed—

Que de long temps m'a ordonnée
Dieu, sur tous le souverain Roy,
Pour donner au monde chastoy.

Yet they mock me.

AUTHOR: I heard you, O Fortune, complain of your wrong. But often you do act unreasonably. When you want sport, you bring Plaisance and Espoir to suffering. Check yourself and play this game no more.

FORTUNE: There is none so great I dare not speak to. I have done and will do as seems good to me. Who will blame me? I am not found reasonable but I fulfill my will. I often change my purpose.¹⁰⁹

The other long treatment of Fortune in Charles's poetry is merely pagan, but there, as elsewhere,¹¹⁰ he finds the remedy of prudence useful.¹¹¹ He alludes to Fortune frequently in all his works.¹¹²

MARTIN LE FRANC

L'Estrif de Fortune et de Vertu of Martin le Franc (c.1410-61) uses only the remedy of spiritual devotion, with hardly more than a glance at the Christian conception:

A contest between Fortune and Virtue is held before Dame Reason. Which will succeed in leading mankind? They begin a *débat*. Fortune accuses Virtue of promising castles in Spain and other-world happiness to man. Fortune herself really creates kings and emperors at her own will. God governs in heaven and she on earth. Virtue had better retire to a nunnery. Virtue replies calmly, but is frank in her opinion of Fortune: "Tant estes petite, inconstante, fresle, muable, incertaine, vagabonde, decepvant, perilleuse, diverse, que on ne vous scet quel nom bailler. Les ungs considerans vostre ignorance, et que sans discretion tribue; les biens mondains, bendent les yeul; a vostre ymage. Les aultres veans vostre varieté vous paingnent blanche d'un costé et noire de l'autre . . . les ungs vous reclament dieu et les aultres deesse, non sachans se masle estes ou femelle." She is allowed by Divine suffrance, and is called Fortune because fortune is mentioned so often at court. Fortune replies, accusing Reason as well as Virtue of responsibility for the tribulation of kings and emperors. She has her special function; let people be

¹⁰⁹ *Poésies Complètes*, I, 129-132 (balades xiii-xv).

¹¹⁰ I, 125; II, 178 (clxviii).

¹¹¹ II, 220-21 (rondeaux ccxxii-xxv; for the remedy of prudence, see ccxxiv).

¹¹² See I, 43, 53, 55, 56-7, 58, 59, 73-4, 76-7, 82, 114, 121, 133, 151, 156, 188, 212; II, 34, 64, 84, 87, 130, 135, 137, 150, 154-5, 156, 164, 219, 222, 230, 232.

praised according to their particular talents. Virtue responds that the work of Fortune in the world is too extensive. She refers to the cases of Adam, Sardanapalus, Cyrus, Tarquin, etc. Fortune answers that she is only putting pride where it belongs. Virtue says that the trouble with France is that princes think only of their amusement; God sends joys and afflictions; Virtue and Noblesse cannot be subject to Fortune. Fortune retorts that the foolish virtuous are poor and think themselves kings; she mocks at the way Virtue exhorts men to scorn worldly goods, and she sneers at the poorly-dressed virtuous. Reason sums up the case and decides that Fortune really has power over none.¹¹³

This is clearly but a half-hearted adoption of the Christian Fortune, if Fortune here can be considered such a figure at all. The remedy is not so much Christian as that of spiritual devotion: the idea that Fortune is a part of the Divine plan is not emphasized.

PIERRE MICHAULT

Pierre Michault's *Dance aux Aveugles*¹¹⁴ owes much in conception to the Dance of Death figure.¹¹⁵ The idea symbolized is, clearly enough, that of the power of various deities over mankind. Love, Death, and Fortune have each a retinue of subjects. The dance of Fortune proceeds as follows:

The signal to begin is furnished by two youths standing near, one with a silver trumpet, the other with a wooden trumpet. The figures of the dancers appear, and after they dance awhile they are presented with prizes and gifts, "sans aucunesfois aviser merites, vertus, qualitez ne vices, ne sans regret a bien ou mal dancer." The mistress of the dance is Fortune;

¹¹³ I have been able to use only the summary in Piaget, pp. 175 ff. Cf. the Italian trial before Il Vecchio, *Smith College Studies in Modern Languages*, III, p. 215. Piaget (pp. 183 ff.) notes the similarity to Petrarch's *De Remediis*, but *L'Estrif* seems to me merely to follow the general tradition of the spiritual remedy. For descriptions of the 1477 and 1506 editions, with a picture of Fortune's wheel, see *Catalogue des Livres de Rothschild*, I, 253-6.

¹¹⁴ Goujet (*Bibliothèque Française*, IX, 358 ff.) does not seem to give a date for this document; the edition of Lambert Duxfils (note opposite page 1) dates it "about eighty years" before 1543.

¹¹⁵ For a bibliography of the *Dance Macabré*, see Goedeke, *Grundriss zur Geschichte der Deutschen Dichtung*, 2d ed., I, § 92. The "dance of love," in which Pandarus hopped always behind, was of course familiar. How old the idea was and just what its connection with the Dance of Death was, I do not know; but the Dance of Death is more easily explicable as the earlier conception.

the two youths with horns are Eur and Malheur; the lady who gives the prizes is Destiny, sometimes lieutenant of Fortune. She has the same character as Fortune: "Car aucunesfois tu la pourras appercevoir doulce, riant, & debonnaire: & a la fois s'elle est aigre, poignant & dangereuse en sa morsure, plus que aspic ne couleuvre." Fortune describes herself: she is goddess, empress, and mistress of the world, sovereign of all lords, having great power to give and to take away. There is no earthly dignity that does not come at her appointment. Remember the fall of Lucifer and of Adam!

"Ce que Cupido & Fortune gouvernent," explains Entendement, "n'est point par puissance par eux attribuée de Dieu; mais par la submission des Danceurs qui leur donnent pouvoir sur eulx; & laissent Raison & moy derriere, en se mettant hors de nostre voye & de leur propre institucion." Animals are not controlled by Fortune. Man, who has free-will, has the power to resist her, and thus he is submitted to her temptations . . .

Puisqu'homme est a sa dure rouhe
Englué par concupiscence,
Il peut aussytost choir en bouhe,
Qu'estre eslevé en audience:
Et ny a point de difference
Du bas au hault; car elle est ronde,
Et tourne sur ung gond le monde.

* * * * *

On peut eviter ceste Dance
Par avoir vertu de coraige,
Et en son estat souffisance
Sans desirer trop hault estaige.¹¹⁶

This is clearly the remedy of spiritual devotion. The passage follows the theme hinted in the wheel-figure of *Les Échecs Amoureux*, and so falls into the category of developments from Boethius. It gives us only his second treatment, however, and the figure is really not Christian in conception.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ Douxfils's ed., pp. 30 ff. For another reference to the dance of Fortune, see p. 21 above; also Guillaume de Machaut, *Voir-Dit*, p. 353. See also Charles d'Orleans, *Poésies*, II, 221 (rondeau ccxxv):

Quant elle tient sa feste,
Les aucuns fait danser,
Et les autres tempeste.

Here, however, the figure is slightly different: the dance seems to be a dance of joy. See Lydgate, *Troy Book*, book V, ll. 2097 ff.

¹¹⁷ For another reference to Fortune by Michault, see Douxfils's ed., p. 128 (*Complainte sur la Mort de la Comtesse de Charrolois*). For references in the anonymous pieces in the volume, see pp. 233-4, 241, 314.

ALAIN CHARTIER

In *L'Esperance, ou Consolation des Trois Vertus*, Alain Chartier (c. 1386-c. 1449) takes the pagan remedy of spiritual devotion directly from the first treatment in Boethius. The piece describes Fortune in the familiar manner; but the peculiar point to notice here is that Fortune is mentioned as found particularly at Court,—“De tout temps en Cour la trouveras.”¹¹⁸ Foy introduces the annihilation of Fortune: “Par ainsi il ne faut douter que seigneurie & servitude sont establissement de loy raisonnable, non mie don de fortune.”¹¹⁹ And Entendement adds: “Pour oster les demourans de mes doubtes, & confermer ma pensée en cremeur de Dieu, monstre s'il te plaist, que ce que nous souffrons soit punition divine: & que on ne le doie imputer à fortune, ne aux efforts de humaine puissance & de mondaine entreprise.”¹²⁰ It is surprising that, with such emphatic denials of Fortune, Alain keeps the goddess elsewhere in so many connections.¹²¹

Discussion of Fortune's work is common in French love-poetry of the period we are now studying.¹²² For illustration of the color of the passages, we may take the following rondeau from a collection:

Par long temps j'ay nagié en l'onde
De la cruelle mer parfonde
De Fortune, qui par son sort
M'a mené jusques a ung port
Le plus maudit de tout le monde.¹²³

¹¹⁸ *Oeuvres* (1617), p. 267. Cf. pp. 394 ff. (*Le Curial*), especially 395, 400; and see p. 25, n. 102, and p. 28 above.

¹¹⁹ Page 316.

¹²⁰ Page 321. Cf. also p. 535 (*Complaincte contre la Mort*),

Helas! comment m'est fortune si dure,
Ne comme a Dieu souffert ceste adventure?

and p. 511 (*La Belle Dame sans Mercy*), “Dieu et fortune me confonde.”

¹²¹ Pages 364, 365, 392, 474, 592, 607-8, 610, 612, 620, 623, 624, 625, 626, 627, 629, 633, 639, 641, 646, 666, 677, 678, 679, 747, 774, 776, 805.

¹²² For example, Paris, *Chansons du XV^e Siècle*, pp. 88, 89, 112; Raynaud, *Rondeaux*, pp. 2, 25, 42-4, 57, 81, 90, 97, 104, 133, 134, 136, 142, 148, 154, 156, 157; Dinaux, *Trouvères*, II, 38, 181, 353.

¹²³ Raynaud, *Rondeaux*, p. 25.

Villon (1431 ?——) finds himself particularly injured by the goddess, whom he places in a learned tradition:

Fortune fu3 par clerç3 jadis nommée,
Que, toy, François, crie et nomme meurtriere.¹²⁴

These lines, like most of the minor poetry and the poetry of love, retain the pagan goddess.

V

In this chapter on French literature we have seen a frequent tendency to refer to Fortune, a natural vitality in the treatment, and an unflagging interest in the question of her existence. Compared with the Italian discussions, there is less of the purely philosophical analysis. Yet the many remedies offered, however pagan, show that the problem was in mind and that it was felt to be real. The consolations for the adversities of Fortune are not merely personal but general. Beside the pagan tradition, we have seen in France an early and spontaneous growth of the Christian conception, with apparently no influence from Dante in idea or in phrasing. If its source is foreign, it springs rather from Boethius. In France the influence of Boethius is more pervading than in Italy, or at least is clearly indicated in a greater number of cases. To Jean de Meun credit is chiefly due, perhaps, for having made accessible, in his translation and in his *Roman de la Rose*, this great source of both the Christian and the pagan idea.

The French literature in which Fortune appears shows, like the Italian, a wide variety, from allegory and satire to elegy and complaint. The allegory of love and the balade and virelay give expression to the secular spirit which fills the Italian *novelle*. In this less moral literature the pagan idea appears conspicuously. It cannot be said, however, that the poems of Philippe de Beaumanoir, Pierre de la Broche, or Watrquet de Couvin, where the Christian goddess is first pictured, lay much more stress on the moral. The French poetry in general seems more inclined to the Orthodox or Christian idea than does the Italian, although perhaps that is because Italy was earlier subject to the Renaissance spirit.

¹²⁴ Villon, *Oeuvres*, ed. Lacroix, p. 132. For other references, see *ibid.*, pp. 90, 112, 180 (God and Fortune), in poems attributed to Villon; and Prompsault's ed., p. 476. For influence of the *Roman de la Rose* on Villon, see G. Paris, *François Villon*, pp. 95-6; for a reference to the *Roman* in Villon, see his *Grand Testament*, st. xv (*Oeuvres*, ed. Lacroix, p. 26).

A NOTE ON THE INFLUENCE OF BOETHIUS

For a study of the influence of Boethius, see H. F. Stewart's essay (1891): pp. 163 ff., influence on *Beowulf*; pp. 170 ff., a study of Alfred's translation; pp. 178 ff., on the Provençal poem *Boece* (xith century); pp. 190 ff., on Notker; pp. 198 ff., on Simund de Freine; pp. 200 ff., on an anonymous writer and Jean de Meun; pp. 206 ff., on Pierre de Paris (xiiith or early xivth century); pp. 208 ff., on an anonymous French poet; pp. 212 ff., on Jehan de Cis; pp. 213 ff., on Frere Renaut de Louhans; pp. 214 ff., on Chaucer. For the French translations of Boethius, see (1) Léopold Delisle, *Inventaire des Manuscrits Français de la Bibliothèque Nationale*, I, 103 (note on MS. 809, Jean de Meun), and II, 317 ff. (notes on eight MSS.); (2) *Romania*, XX, 329, and XLII, 331 ff.; (3) Gröber, *Grundriss*, 1897, II (ii), 104-5; (4) Gaston Paris, *Littérature Française au Moyen Age* (Paris, 1914), p. 312. For Nicolas Trivet's commentary, see Jourdain, *Excursions Historiques*, etc. (Paris, 1888), pp. 29-58. Note the references to Boethius in the present study, and to them add Baehrens' *Poetae Latini Minores*, V, 419; *Margarita Philosophica*, by Gregor Reisch, VIII, xvi; Christine de Pisan, *Livre du Chemin de Long Estude*, p. 12, lines 278 ff.; Lydgate, *Troy Book*, IV, 3008 ff.

A NOTE ON BOCCACCIO

In the Harvard Library, under the title *Bocace des Nobles Maleureux*, is an anonymous French translation of Boccaccio's *De Casibus*, "newly printed," says the colophon, by one Nicolas Couteau in 1538. In the preamble to chapter one the translation is referred to Laurent de Premierfait,—“translate de latin en langage francoys par honnorable homme et sage maistre Laurens de premier fait.” I notice that this French version lacks the introductory material of the 1544 Latin edition by Ziegler, but it has a “prologue” and a full table of contents not in Ziegler's volume. On some comparison of the texts, I observed that the French introduces the Christian Fortuna. See, for example, in book iv, ch. v,

Ziegler

Bis è culmine Dionysium suis operibus procurantibus fortuna deiecerat (p. 96).

Couteau

car fortune servante et executeresse de la voulente divine avoit par deux fois abatu le tyrant Denys de son hault estat (f. lxxvii v^o).

And in the same book, cap, ix,

ne fortuna superiorem arbitrantur mortales, ab eadem in eum (p. 101).

lordonnance de dieu ou de fortune sa servante qui font et transmuent ung royaulme en autre (f. lxxxv v^o).

Durrieu, in his edition of the “Boccace de Munich” (1909, p. 22), says that Laurent de Premierfait introduced into his French translation “toute une série d'amplifications et d'éclaircissements portant surtout sur des points d'histoire et de géographie”; and that he added material from Justin, Florus, Livy, Valerius Maximus, and others. According to Durrieu, Laurent's first version was completed November 13, 1400, and his second, which included the additions, was finished April 15, 1409, with a new prologue. Of the first manuscript very few copies were made, but the second was reproduced many times; it was late in the century, however, before either version was printed. Since I had not access to either of the Laurent versions, as a last resort I made a comparison of the Couteau text with such parts of the Laurent as appear in the plates of the Durrieu volume. The following parallel passages will show the result:

Durrieu

Plate III

Selon raison et bonnes meurs. Iomme soy excercant en aucune science

Couteau

Prologue (sign. a ii)

Selon raison et bonnes meurs l'homme soy excercant en aucune

speculative ou autre. puet honnestement muer son conseil *ou propos* de bien en mieulx, attendue la mutation des choses. des temps. et des lieux. Et aussi puet un potier casser et rompre aucun sien vaissel combien quil soit bien fait pour luy donner autre fourme qui lug semble meilleur. Et ceste licence de meur la chose en mieulx nest pas donnee a lomme pour seulement amender ou corriger sa propre oeuvre: ains mesmement loist soit a chascun *de ce faire en la besoigne* dautrui. puis que on le face par bonte de couraige. et par mouvement doeuvre de pure charite. qui en soy ne contient envie ne arrogance. Comme doncques ia piece *le laurens de premier. a lenhortement et requeste daucuns.* eusse translate de latin en françois *le moins mal que ie peu* un tresnotable et exquis livre de Iehan bocace [there is nothing more on the plate.]

Plate XI (lower part)

Ie cuide que aucun peu ie aye oste et desmeu les couraiges des seigneurs de leur durte par avant obstinee. Et si cuide que par les *grans* exemples devant diz iaye espovente loultraige et la desordonnance des orgueilleuses ames. car des humbles ie ne parle iamais pource que humilite ne chiet ne *ne* trebusche par quelconque fortune. Ie ne scay qui est celui qui *soit* si dur en cuer cui sans paour ait peu lire ou [there is nothing more on the plate.]

Plate XI (upper part)

Le .xiii^e. chapitre contient le case de olimpias royne de macedoine et mere du grant alexandre. et commence ou latin. Iam iam.

vertu peult honnestement muer son conseil de bien en mieulx attendue la mutation des choses/des temps/et des lieux. Et aussi peult ung potier casser et rompre aucun sien vaissel combien quil soit bien fait pour luy donner autre forme quil luy semble meilleure. Et ceste licence de muer la chose en mieulx nest pas donnee a lhomme pour seulement amender ou corriger sa propre oeuvre/ains mesmement est a chascun *donnee pour ce faire en la besongne dautrui/mais que* on le face par bonte de courage et par mouvement de oeuvre de charite qui en soy ne contient envie ne arrogance. Comme doncques ia piece *fut* de latin en françois translate ung tresnotable et exquis livre de Iehan Boccace, . . .

Book IV, preamble (f. lxxiii v^o)

Ie cuyde que aucun pou ie aye oste et desmeu les courages des seigneurs *et* de leur durte paravant obstinee/et si cuyde que par les exemples devant ditz ie aye espovente loultrage et la desordonnance des orgueilleuses ames/car des humbles ie ne parle iamais pource que humilite ne chiet ne trebusche par quelconque fortune. Ie ne scay qui est celui qui *est* si dur en cuer qui sans paour ayt peu lire ou escouter. . . .

f. lxxxvi r^o

Le .xii. chapitre contient le cas de Olimpias royne de Macedoine et mere du grant alexandre *roy de macedoine*/et commence ou latin. Iamiam quo flector et flector. &c.

Le .xiii^e. chappitre contient le cas de *aristodes* roy des siciliens et commence ou latin. Non solum.

Le .xv^e. chappitre contient le cas de plusieurs le maleureux nobles hommes *courrouciez pour leurs males fortunes.* et commence ou latin. A flebili.

Plate XXV

francois petrarc ou premier chappitre de luitiesme livre . . . iay souvenance . . . en repos *ne* en oisivete . . . *des* quant ie vy *ia* venir . . . puissance richesses et autres dons. . . .

f. lxxxviii r^o

Le .xiii. chapitre contient le cas de *Agathodes qui fut filz dung potier de terre que fut duc de Siracuse et puis* roy des Siciliens. Et commence ou latin. Non solum.

f. lxxxix v^o

Le .xiiii. chapitre contient le cas de *Bersanes et de Rosanes nobles femmes iadis du grant roy Alexandre/ et de plusieurs autres nobles malheureux parens dudit Alexandre/et* commence ou latin. A flebili *Agathodis fine etc.*

Book IX, ch. i, f. xciiii r^o

Francois Pert premier a cou chapitre [an obvious misprint] du huytiesme livre . . . ay ie souvenance . . . en repos *ou* en oysivete . . . *de* quant ie vy venir . . . puissance *et* richesses et autres dons . . .

Colophon (f. ccxx r^o)

Cy finist le neufviesme et dernier livre de Iehan Boccace des nobles hommes et femmes infortunez/translate de latin en francoys. Nouvellement imprime a Paris par Nicolas Couteau. Imprimeur demourant audit lieu/Et fut acheve de imprimer le penultime de Decembre mil. D. xxxviii.

The Couteau translation evidently came from a Latin text different from the one Ziegler edited. In the descriptive heading of the first chapter, for instance, the French version says that in Latin the chapter begins "*Malorum nostrorum.&c.*," whereas the first chapter in Ziegler's version begins "*Duorum nostrorum mortalium.*" The second chapter of the Latin, says Couteau, begins "*Si cetera desint,*" but Ziegler's begins "*Si cetera desunt.*" So too, the third chapter of the second book is said to begin "*Globus dolentium,*" but Ziegler's begins "*Globus ingens dolen-*

tium"; the eighth chapter is said to begin "Si qui ex parte," but Ziegler's begins "Hic quic ex parte"; and similar variations occur here and there throughout the nine books of the work. Occasionally the chapters do not coincide in order of arrangement, but in the matter of headings there seems to be agreement between the Laurent version, the Couteau, and the Ziegler, except in one case (in book IV) where the Laurent is non-committal:

LAURENT (Plate XI, ch. xiii)	COUTEAU (ch. xii)	ZIEGLER (ch. xii)
et commence ou latin. Iam iam.	et commence ou latin. Iamiam quo flector et flector.&c.	Iamiam quo flector, non habeo

It seems clear that the Couteau volume, in spite of marked divergences, is in some way greatly indebted to Laurent's second version. The earlier text of Laurent is said to be more faithful to the Latin than the later one is (see Hortis, *Studj*, p. 624). Graesse, in his *Trésor* (I, 446) notes the Couteau 1538 version, and says it is a copy of the edition of Antoine Vérard, 1494.¹²⁵ Brunet (*Manuel*, I, 988) says that the 1494 edition of Vérard is from Laurent de Premierfait, in some places rewritten and the name suppressed; and Durrieu (*Boccace*, p. 23) notes the Vérard edition of Laurent's second version. It appears, then, that the text has gone through several hands. The Couteau text seems to indicate that Vérard went back to the Latin for verification. He enlarged two of the Latin tags from Laurent and increased and altered the descriptive headings.

One interesting point in this study is that, if the Couteau text comes from Laurent, and if, in spite of other alterations, he included all the descriptive passages of the Christian Fortuna that we find here, then Laurent is to be credited with a phrase of which Chaucer is strangely reminiscent,—“fortune servante et exerce-tesse de la volente divine” (cf. Chaucer's “But O Fortune executrice of wierdes,” *Troilus*, III, 617; for the “volente divine” of the Laurent passage, cf. Chaucer's “divine thought,”—see

¹²⁵ Following Brunet, Bacchi della Lega in his “Bibliografia” of Boccaccio (p. 27) notes also a 1515 edition by Couteau of which the 1538 edition may be a copy.

Boethius, IV, pr. vi, especially lines 60-68.) No borrowing is necessary on either side, of course; but here in the French is Chaucer's great phrase.

Cf., however, Petrarch (*Smith College Studies in Mod. Lang.*, III, p. 209, n. 143). Laurent seems to be a little younger than Chaucer, but he had begun his translation by 1356 (see Koepfel, *Laurents de Premierfait und Lydgates Bearbeitungen*, etc., p. 37, and note 1, which quotes from the prologue to Lydgate's *Falls of Princes*). Chaucer's *Monk's Tale* seems to point less to the French text than to the Latin. For Laurent's work, see Durrieu's *Boccace de Munich*, part i; and Hortis's *Studj*, index, under "Premierfait," including Appendices iv and v, which give the prologues of Laurent. For his life, see Le Roux de Lincy and Tisserand, *Paris et ses Historiens*, pp. 412-15; also La Croix du Maine and Du Verdier, *Bibliothèques Françaises*, 1772-73, II, 32-3, and IV, 576.

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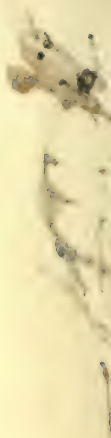
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